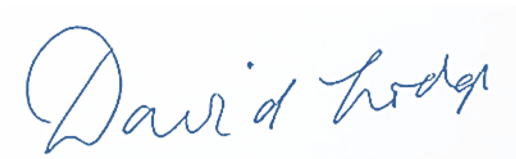
To Paraphrase the Unparaphrasable

David Lodge's Literary Criticism

A Reader





Selected and edited by

Lidia Vianu

Contemporary Literature Press

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The University of Bucharest. 2015

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The Unparaphrasable?

Paraphrase: 'Express meaning of (passage) in other words.' (OED)

In order to make the present selection, I spent a summer reading David Lodge's books of literary criticism all over again, and have found them as theoretical as ever, and yet perfectly 'teachable'—student-friendly, to use a neologism that belongs to an area of information which has shaped the minds of the present young generation.

I admit I compiled this selection as a guide for my own students at the University of Bucharest, most of them lost in the maze of coinages repeated with gusto by some literary critics of our times.

Can one be theoretical and clear at the same time?

There is no doubt that literary criticism means a lot more than the statement 'What a lovely book!'. There is no doubt that a literary critic must use theoretical tools. Are these tools any use unless they really fit

Am lucrat la selecția pentru acest volum o vară: am recitit întreaga critică literară scrisă de David Lodge. Cărțile acestea sunt în același timp teoretice şi aplicate. Sunt *student-friendly*, dacă e să folosesc un neologism dintre acelea care le sunt atât de familiare tinerilor din ziua de azi.

Volumul de față are un scop clar: am căutat să alcătuiesc un ghid pentru propriii mei studenți de la Universitatea Bucureşti. Prea mulți dintre ei se rătăcesc printre 'vocabulele sacre' inventate şi repetate cu mare poftă de unii critici literari contemporani.

Se poate, oare, să fim teoretici dar şi pe înțelesul cititorului în acelaşi timp?

Fără doar şi poate, critica literară nu exprimă sentimentele criticului, sau, în orice caz, nu numai pe ele. Fără unelte teoretice, suntem simpli cititori, nu şi critici. Cum folosim, însă, aceste unelte? Cum le alegem dacă vrem să sprijinim, nu să subminăm, textul analizat?

the text under discussion? How does one make them fit?

When the literary critic's mind is set on Cultural Studies, how far should this critic be allowed to stray away from the work under discussion?

These are the questions I was asking myself while making the present selection. I was looking for an answer.

'Fashion' used to be tyrannical. If, at some point in history, you failed to wear a wig when everybody else was wearing it, you were described as 'bizarre', a misfit. Right now, the unwritten laws of literary criticism seem to follow the old pattern of 'fashion'. When he wrote *My Strange Quest for Mensonge: Structuralism's Hidden Hero* (1987), Malcolm Bradbury must have sensed that.

I have chosen a critic who was a close friend of Malcolm Bradbury's, and who writes books that are both theoretical and yet perfectly accessible at the same time.

The title for this selection comes, in fact, from David Lodge himself. The excerpt runs as follows:

> 'It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable.'

Cam cât de mult pot divaga de la discursul propriu-zis al scriitorului studiat acei critici care se află într-o idilă mărturisită cu Studiile Culturale?

Am înşirat câteva dintre întrebările care m-au preocupat în timp ce lucram la această selecţie. Căutam un răspuns.

De-a lungul istoriei, „moda" a tiranziat omul de multe ori. Dacă, de pildă, te năşteai la vemea când se purta perucă, şi refuzai să ţi-o pui pe cap, dezaprobarea majorităţii nu întârzia să se facă simţită. Trăim acum o vreme când „moda" s-a refugiat în critica literară, după ce ea a fost exilată din îmbrăcăminte, de pildă. Acest fenomen i-a apărut clar lui Malcolm Bradbury, şi l-a descris într-o carte: *My Strange Quest for Mensonge: Structuralism's Hidden Hero* (1987).

Iată, prin urmare, din ce cauză am ales acest critic, ale cărui cărţi sunt şi teoretice, dar şi cât se poate de clare. Este vorba, printre altele, de un foarte bun prieten al sus-numitului Malcolm Bradbury.

În caz că cititorul se întreabă de unde vine titlul selecţiei mele, şi ce vrea el să spună, ei bine, răspunsul vine direct de la David Lodge:

> „Ca o ironie a soartei, orice operă fictivă ar discuta criticii literari, ei se văd puşi în situaţia de a parafraza ceva ce nu se poate spune cu alte cuvinte..."

Lidia Vianu

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David Lodge

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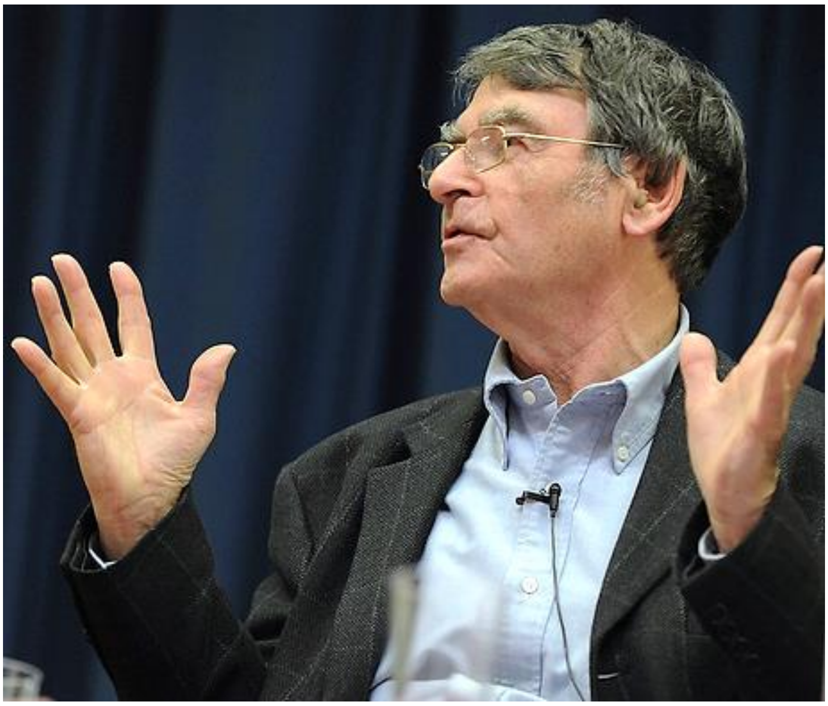
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Table of Contents

Language of Fiction.
Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel.
1966 — Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966 — p. 13

Theory and the language of academic criticism. — p. 14
from "Foreword to the Routledge Classics Edition".

The novelist's medium is language. — p. 15
from the Preface.

Joyce's medium was language, ... his language demands our central attention as critics. — p. 16
from "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 1. The Modern Movement in Fiction: A Digression."

It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable. — p. 18

from "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 1. J. M. Cameron: These Words in this Order."

Language—the particular selection and arrangement of words of which a work of literature is composed—is the only objective and fixed *datum*. — p. 20

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from "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 1. Conclusions to Section I."

In reading *Tom Jones* or *Clarissa* or any other novel, we enter a unique linguistic universe; we learn a new language. p. 22

from "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 2. J. Warburg: Appropriate choice."

To handle words is necessarily to handle meanings. p. 23

from "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 2. F. R. Leavis and the moral dimension of fiction."

All good criticism therefore is necessarily a response to the creative use of language. p. 24

from "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 3. Conclusions: Principles."

Responding correctly to the language used. p. 26

from "Part II. 4. Tess, Nature, and the voices of Hardy."

The Novelist at the Crossroads,
and other essays on fiction and criticism.
1971
Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971 p. 27

Obsequies over the novel may be as premature today as they were in 1939. p. 28

from "Part I. 1. The Novelist at the Crossroads."

It is noteworthy that novels are not only read and studied more and more in an exclusively academic context, but increasingly (especially in America) written there as well. p. 31



from "Part II. *Fiction and Criticism.* 2. Waiting for the End: Current Novel Criticism."

All good criticism is a response to language. p. 34
from "Part II. *Fiction and Criticism*. 3. Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach through Language."

Consciousness is dependent on verbal concepts. p. 36

from "Part II. *Fiction and Criticism*. 3. Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach through Language."

We are, perhaps, more in danger of mistaking than neglecting masterpieces. p. 38

from "Part IV. *Fiction and Modernism*. 8. Objections to William Burroughs."

To bend the existing conventions without breaking them—this is the strenuous and heroic calling of the experimental artist. p. 39

from "Part IV. *Fiction and Modernism*. 8. Objections to William Burroughs."

The American Dream and the Russian Revolution. p. 41

from "Part V. *Fiction and Utopia.* 12. Utopia and Criticism: The Radical Longing for Paradise."

The academy has come to dominate criticism. p. 42

from "Part VI. 14. Crosscurrents in Modern English Criticism."

Working with Structuralism. Routledge London and New York, 1981 p. 44
Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.
1981

Classifying and analysing ..., and even a certain amount of p. 45



jargon.

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."

Antimodernist art ... aspires to the condition of history. p. 47

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."

Eliot and Joyce. p. 49

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."

Postmodernism. p. 50

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."

Postmodernism tries to resist assimilation into conventional categories of the literary. p. 52

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."

David Lodge: basically antimodernist, but with elements of modernism and postmodernism. p. 53

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."

The question I wish to raise ... is whether progress in theory and methodology means progress in the critical reading of texts. p. 54

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Realist Text: Ernest Hemingway's 'Cat in the Rain'."



Even those writers and critics who seek to escape from or deny the historicity of literature do so on grounds that are in one sense of the word, historicist. p. 56

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 5. Historicism and Literary History: Mapping the Modern Period."

Any literary historical account of the Modern period must recognize the coexistence, within its span, of at least two kinds of writing, only one of which is modernist. p. 58

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 5. Historicism and Literary History: Mapping the Modern Period."

The concept of a period, whether in history at large or in literary history, is not a fact, but an interpretation. p. 60

from "I. Applying Structuralism. 5. Historicism and Literary History: Mapping the Modern Period."

Literary biography. p. 62

from "III. Aspects of Waugh. 9. Evelyn Waugh: Habits of a Lifetime."

The ending of a novel is the very point at which every reader, however naïve, must recognise that it is not reality but an imitation of it, not a slice of life but a statement about it. p. 64

from "IV. Fiction and the Reading Public. 11. Ambiguously Ever After: Problematical Endings in English Fiction."

The novelist's 'capital'. p. 66

from "IV. Fiction and the Reading Public. 12. Turning Unhappiness into Money: Fiction and the Market."



The literary market. p. 68

from "IV. Fiction and the Reading Public. 12. Turning Unhappiness into Money: Fiction and the Market."

After Bakhtin. Routledge London and New York, 1990 p. 69
Essays on fiction and criticism.
1990

The professionalization of academic criticism has opened up a widening gap between it and 'lay' discussion of literature. p. 70

from the Introduction.

Art lives and develops by deviating unpredictably from aesthetic norms. p. 72

from "2. Mimesis and diegesis in modern fiction."

The Art of Fiction. Penguin Books, London, 1992 p. 75
Illustrated from classic and modern texts.
1992

The intrusive authorial voice. p. 76

from "2. The Intrusive Author *(George Eliot, E. M. Forster)*."

Narrative, whatever its medium—words, film, strip-cartoon—holds the interest of an audience by raising questions in their minds, and delaying the answers. p. 77

from "3. Suspense *(Thomas Hardy)*."

A fictional story is unlikely to engage our interest unless we know whose story it is. p. 78

from "6. Point of View *(Henry James)*."



Modern literary novelists, in contrast, wary of neat solutions and happy endings, have tended to invest their mysteries with an aura of ambiguity and to leave them unresolved. p. 79

from "7. Mystery *(Rudyard Kipling)*."

Naming the characters. p. 81

from "8. Names *(David Lodge, Paul Auster)*."

The stream-of-consciousness novel. p. 83

from "9. The Stream of Consciousness *(Virginia Woolf)*."

Representing consciousness in prose fiction. p. 84

from "9. The Stream of Consciousness *(Virginia Woolf)*."

For the reader, it's rather like wearing earphones plugged into someone's brain. p. 87

from "10. Interior Monologue *(James Joyce)*."

The way to tell a story. p. 89

from "16. Time-Shift *(Muriel Spark)*."

Eliot's praise of *Ulysses* — part acknowledgement, and part manifesto. p. 90

from "21. Intertextuality *(Joseph Conrad)*."

Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*. p. 92

from "34. The Unreliable Narrator *(Kazuo Ishiguro)*."



The Practice of Writing. Penguin Books, London. 1996 p. 95
Essays, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary.
1996

A self-aware creative writer. p. 96

from the Preface.

One can consider the situation of the contemporary novelist either aesthetically or institutionally. p. 98

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?"

It is an interesting and significant fact that at the very moment when post-structuralist academic criticism has been proclaiming the Death of the Author as a theoretical axiom, an unprecedented degree of public attention has been focused on contemporary authors as living, breathing human beings. p. 100

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?"

Contemporary writing ... is likely to be reader-friendly. p. 102

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?"

Novels burn facts as engines burn fuel. p. 104

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Fact and Fiction in the Novel: An Author's Note."

Graham Greene, the pro writer. p. 105

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Lives of Graham Greene."



***Finnegans Wake*: the exemplary text of modern critical theory.** p. 106

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."

Joyce's Choices. p. 108

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."

Everyone who met the young Joyce was struck by his extraordinary pride, arrogance and self-confidence. p. 109

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."

Joyce's choice of the novel. p. 110

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."

John Burgess Wilson. p. 111

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Making of Anthony Burgess."

A bridge between modernism and post-modernism. p. 112

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Making of Anthony Burgess."

Anthony Burgess. p. 113

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Making of Anthony Burgess."

The modernist poetics of fiction. p. 114

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' What Kind of Fiction Did Nabokov Write? A Practitioner's View."

Free indirect style. p. 116



from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novel as Communication."

The modernist novel thus tends to endorse the philosophical argument known as solipsism—that the only thing I can be sure exists is myself as a thinking subject. p. 117

from "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novel as Communication."

The paperback novel. p. 119

from "PART TWO: Mixed Media. Novel, Screenplay, Stage Play: Three Ways of Telling a Story."

Consciousness and the Novel.

Penguin Books, London, 2002 p. 120

Connected Essays.
2002

Such general, or generalisable, ideas as I have about literature nowadays tend to grow out of reflection on my own "practice of writing"—the title of my last book of criticism. p. 121

from the "Preface."

***Finnegans Wake*: a punning synthetic language of his own invention.** p. 123

from "1. Consciousness and the Novel."

The single human voice, telling its own story, can seem the only authentic way of rendering consciousness. p. 125

from "1. Consciousness and the Novel."

It may be, therefore, that every time we try to describe the conscious self we misrepresent it because we are trying to fix something that is always changing. p. 126



from "1. Consciousness and the Novel."

Inasmuch as it aspires to a scientific, or at least systematic, knowledge of its subject, criticism can be seen as hostile to creativity itself. p. 127

from "2. Literary Criticism and Literary Creation."

The "literary best-seller". p. 129

from "4. Forster's Flawed Masterpiece."

The modern or modernist novel ... is characterised by obscurity, ambiguity, and the presentation of experience as perceived by characters whose vision is limited or unreliable. p. 131

from "7. Henry James and the Movies."

A Chronology of David Lodge's Life and Works p. 132



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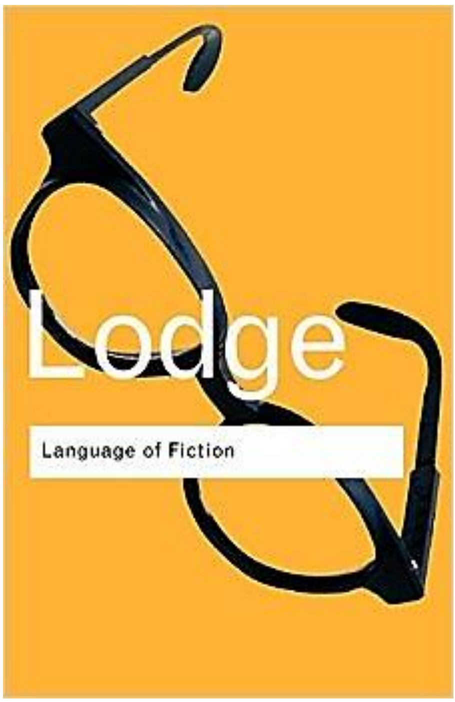


Language of Fiction.

Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel.

1966

Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966





Theory and the language of academic criticism.

In the 1960s it was still possible to write a book of literary criticism that would simultaneously satisfy qualified scholars and interest the general reader, because there was a discourse common to both; but there was not a plethora of such books on the market, and when one appeared it was received with interest. In the succeeding decades the academic profession expanded enormously, and since advancement in it depends upon publication there has been a chronic overproduction of titles, many of which are doomed to have a tiny circulation and to be noticed only in specialised journals. Over the same period the language of academic criticism became more arcane and jargon-ridden, alienating the general reading public and the media that serve it. This was largely due to the impact on British and American scholarship of two tidal waves of theory from Continental Europe, structuralism and post-structuralism, which swamped the humanities with a bewildering variety of new analytical methods and metalanguages. Some of them, it seemed to me, had genuine explanatory power, and I assimilated them in to my own criticism; about others I had serious reservations.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, pp x-xi. "Foreword to the Routledge Classics Edition".



The novelist's medium is language.

The novelist's medium is language: whatever he does, *qua* novelist, he does in and through language. That, to me, is an axiom, and will, I believe, be generally acceptable as such. But the implications of this axiom for literary criticism are not so easily determined or agreed upon. Criticism of the novel which bases its arguments on detailed reference to the language novelists use (such as the essays on English fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries presented in the second part of this book) still needs to justify itself on theoretical grounds; and the process of justification involves many interesting and important issues concerning the nature of literature and the principles of criticism.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, pp xiii. Preface.



Joyce's medium was language, ... his language demands our central attention as critics.

We find Conrad, in his artistic *credo*, laying this kind of emphasis on the writer's traffic with language:

> … it is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour, and that the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of constant usage. [1]

That form and content are inseparable, that style is not a decorative embellishment upon subject matter, but the very medium in which the subject is turned into art—these and similar principles are exemplified abundantly in the theory and practice of the novelists I have named. It is tempting, therefore, for the critic concerned to assert the importance of the novelist's use of language, to look primarily or exclusively to these novelists for support and illustration. But it is a temptation to be resisted if criticism is to improve its capacity to deal with the language of all novels.

The 'modern' novel, the novel of Flaubert, James, Joyce, and their like, is clearly under the magnetic attraction of symbolist aesthetics, and thus very largely amenable to modern poetics: it delights in irony and ambiguity, it is rich in figurative devices, it exploits the phonological level of language extensively (and is thus difficult to translate), it probes deep into the private subjective world of vision and dream, and its climaxes are 'epiphanies', moments of piercing insight



analogous to the images and symbols of the modern poet. Modern criticism has therefore naturally and rightly approached such fiction with tools sharpened on modern poetry. That Joyce's medium was language, that his language demands our central attention as critics, is a proposition that no one is likely to challenge. But in so far as the study of the novelist's language is limited to those who most obviously invite it, because their use of language answers immediately to our view of how literary language works, we risk implying that the language of other, earlier novelists is less integrally related to their achievements, or we encourage a crudely evolutionary view of the novel according to which it gets better and better, or we encourage invidious comparisons between novelists. We do not want a normative concept of the language of prose fiction which will predictably give the first prize to Flaubert and the wooden spoon to George Eliot,[2] though this was the tendency of some early attempts to apply the principles of New Criticism to the novel. If the criticism of the novelist as a verbal artist is to command authority, it must show its relevance to all the available material, and not to one section of it merely.

[1]Joseph Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1914 edition).
[2]Neither, of course, does one want to see the order reversed, as Dr Leavis would seem to wish. Since George Eliot has been mentioned, I should like to note here that her work has recently attracted two excellent critical studies which are notable for their attention to language: Barbara Hardy's *The Novels of George Eliot* (1959) and W. J. Harvey's *The Art of George Eliot* (1961).

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, pp 31-32. "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 1. The Modern Movement in Fiction: A Digression."



It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable.

The basis of this assertion was well stated by Coleridge, who seems to have derived it from his excellent schoolmaster, the Rev. James Bowyer:[1]

> whatever lines can be translated into other words of the same language, without diminution of their significance, either in sense, or association, or in any worthy feeling, are so far vicious in their diction.[2]

This is the familiar commonplace of modern criticism, that poetry is distinguished from other kinds of discourse by being non-paraphrasable. (A parallel and, as I have suggested, less easily verifiable formula is that poetry is untranslatable.) Now, in so far as this argument depends upon practical demonstration, it is most convincing when tested on poems, and particularly lyric poems, where the verbal, syntactical and phonological organization is highly complex, concentrated and 'artificial'; and the effect of any small change or omission can be easily appreciated. Few modern critics trouble to prove that poetry is non-paraphrasable, but their justification of every minute part of a good poem on aesthetic grounds implies this. Novels, however, do not, on the whole, invite this kind of analysis, for various reasons: because they are so long, because it is impossible to hold all their words in the mind at once, because their language has the feel of casual speech, and so on. Paraphrase, in the sense of summary, is as indispensable to the novel-critic as close analysis is to the critic of lyric poetry. The



natural deduction is that novels are paraphrasable whereas poems are not. But this is a false deduction because close analysis is itself a disguised form of paraphrase, differing from the paraphrase of conventional novel-criticism only in that it tends towards expansion rather than compression. It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable. Whenever we try to express our understanding and appreciation of a literary text, we are obliged to state its meanings in different words; and it is in the *distance* between the original words and our own words, when the latter are brought to their maximum of sensitive and articulate responsiveness, that we feel the uniqueness of the writer's achievement.*

[1]Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter I.
[2]Coleridge, *Select Poetry and Prose*, edited Stephen Potter, p. 217.
*Cf. the quotation from Walter J. Ong below, p. 72.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, pp 36-37. "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 1. J. M. Cameron: These Words in this Order."



Language—the particular selection and arrangement of words of which a work of literature is composed—is the only objective and fixed *datum.*

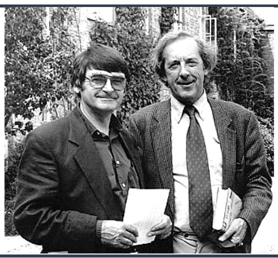
In short, what I am suggesting is that in literary discourse, the writer discovers what he has to say in the process of saying it*, and the reader discovers what is said in responding to the way it is said. In the reading of literature, therefore, the expressive, the cognitive, and the affective are inextricably mingled. The writer expresses what he knows by affecting the reader; the reader knows what is expressed by being receptive to affects. The medium of this process is language. Language—the particular selection and arrangement of words of which a work of literature is composed—is the only objective and fixed *datum.* The expressive origin of the work, and its effective consequences, exist, but the former is irrecoverable, and the latter variable. From this I conclude that, while a literary structure has an objective existence which can be objectively (or 'scientifically') described, such a description has little value in literary criticism until it is related to a process of human communication which is not amenable to objective description. The language of the novel, therefore, will be most satisfactorily and completely studied by the methods, not of linguistics or stylistics (though these disciplines can make valuable contributions), but of literary criticism, which seeks to define the meaning and value of literary artefacts by relating subjective response to objective text, always pursuing exhaustiveness of explication and unanimity of judgment, but conscious that these goals are unattainable.

*Since writing this I have come across the following remark by Mary McCarthy : 'I learn what I



want to say in the course of saying it. I think this must be true of most fiction-writers,' 'Letter to a Translator about *The Group*', *Encounter XXIII* (Nov. 1964), p. 76. This 'letter' is an interesting, and rather rare case of detailed analysis of verbal effects carried out by a practising writer on her own work.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, pp 68-69. "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 2. J. Warburg: Appropriate choice."



In reading *Tom Jones* or *Clarissa* or any other novel, we enter a unique linguistic universe; we learn a new language.

In reading *Tom Jones* or *Clarissa* or any other novel, we enter a unique linguistic universe; we learn a new language designed to carry a particular view of experience. (This explains why, in general, our reading-speed accelerates as we progress through a novel, without any adverse effect on the depth of our understanding.) If this language has its own internal logic and beauty, if it can consistently bring off the feat of realization, we adopt it, and give our assent to the beliefs of the implied author, for the duration of the reading experience*. But if this language is characterized by confusion, contradiction, internal inconsistencies and expectations unfulfilled, we will not adopt it, even temporarily, nor the view of experience it carries, however worthy and sincere the latter may be. All writers necessarily say what they say at the expense of not saying what they do not say, but only the unsatisfactory writer reminds us of this.

*By the 'reading experience' I mean the sustained effort of critical understanding focused on a particular text, which usually continues long after we have 'finished' it. Even after this process is concluded, or abandoned, a book does not, of course, cease to affect us. But its affects will mingle with and be modified by the affects of all the other books we have read and of other kinds of experience; and our assent to the beliefs of the implied author, if it survives at all, will be less complete than when we were reading him.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, p 73. "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 2. F. R. Leavis and the moral dimension of fiction."



To handle words is necessarily to handle meanings.

Confusion about the novelist's art is likely to persist as long as we think of his use of language (or 'style') as a skill that can be distinguished from, and on occasion weighed against, his ability to create characters and actions. Such skill can only be demonstrated and assessed when the language is 'about' something. To handle words is necessarily to handle meanings; and in the case of fiction we summarize such meanings in such concepts as 'plot' and 'character'.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, p 81. "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 3. Conclusions: Principles."



All good criticism therefore is necessarily a response to the creative use of language.

If a writer tells us about the 'great idea' he has for a novel, we can only wait hopefully for the completed work to say whether his confidence was justified. If he tells us enough to excite our own confidence, he will already have begun the process of forcing his vaguely defined *donnée* into a fully articulate form, in which process he makes its meaning and value clear not only to us but to himself. Henry James (whose notebooks provide vivid illustrations of this process) has commented acutely on the question under discussion here:

> This sense of the story being the idea, the starting-point of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from the organic whole; and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, so that every word and every punctuation-point contribute directly to the expression, in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath.[1]

It is natural that we should want to give credit to, for instance, Mr William Golding for conceiving the basic 'idea' of *The Lord of the Flies;* but a moment's reflection will convince us that this idea was not bound to burgeon into a successful novel. Whenever we praise a novelist for his 'idea' or 'story', or for more local manifestations of his gifts—his observation of a certain trait in human behaviour, or his contrivance of an unexpected but convincing turn of events—we are summarizing the complex satisfaction we derived from these things in their fully articulate form. All good criticism therefore is necessarily a



response to the creative use of language, whether it is talking explicitly of 'plot' or 'character' or any other of the categories of narrative literature. These terms are useful -- indeed essential—but the closer we get to defining the unique identity and interest of *this* plot, of *that* character, the closer we are brought to a consideration of the language in which we encounter these things.

[1]Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', *The Future of the Novel*, ed. Leon Edel, (Vintage Books edition, New York, 1956), p. 21.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, p 82. "Part I. The Novelist's Medium and the Novelist's Art: Problems in Criticism. Section 3. Conclusions: Principles."



Responding correctly to the language used.

In a novel, however, no representation of reality can be entirely neutral and objective: it must always be mediated through the consciousness of a character or a narrator. The reader must be able to identify this consciousness, and he does so by responding correctly to the language used.

from *Language of Fiction. Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1966, p 190. "Part II. 4. Tess, Nature, and the voices of Hardy."

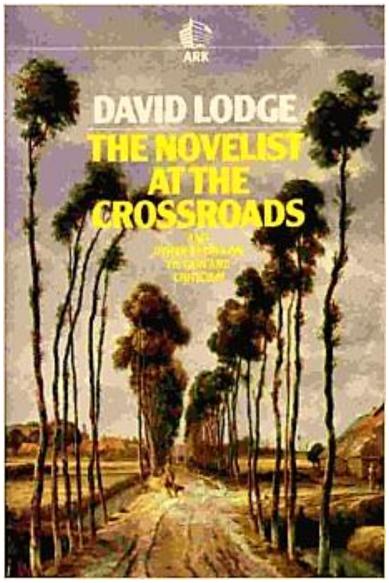


The Novelist at the Crossroads,

and other essays on fiction and criticism

1971

Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971





Obsequies over the novel may be as premature today as they were in 1939.

This brings me to my conclusion, which is a modest affirmation of faith in the future of realistic fiction. In part this is a realization of a personal preference. I like realistic novels, and I tend to write realistic fiction myself. The elaborate code of literary decorum that governs the composition of realistic fiction—consistency with history, solidity of specification, and so on—which to many of the writers discussed above seems inhibiting, or evasive, or redundant—is to my mind a valuable discipline and source of strength—or at least can be. Like metrical or stanzaic form in verse, which prevents the poet from saying what he wants to say in the way that comes most readily to his mind, involving him in a laborious struggle with sounds and meanings that, if he is resourceful enough, yields results superior to spontaneous expression, so the conventions of realistic fiction prevent the narrative writer from telling the first story that comes into his head—which is likely to be either autobiography or fantasy—and compel him to a kind of concentration on the possibilities of his *donnée* that may lead him to new and quite unpredictable discoveries of what he has to tell. In the novel personal experience must be explored and transmuted until it acquires an authenticity and persuasiveness independent of its actual origins; while the fictive imagination through which this exploration and transmutation is achieved is itself subject to an empirical standard of accuracy and plausibility. The problem of reconciling these two opposite imperatives is essentially rhetorical and (contrary to Mr Scholes) requires great linguistic resourcefulness and skill for its successful solution. (I am not of course denying



that fabulation or autobiography or the non-fiction novel have their own internal disciplines and challenges, but merely trying to define those of the realistic novel).

If the case for realism has any ideological content it is that of liberalism. The aesthetics of compromise go naturally with the ideology of compromise, and it is no coincidence that both are under pressure at the present time. The non-fiction novel and fabulation are *radical* forms which take their impetus from an extreme reaction to the world we live in—*The Armies of the Night* and *Giles Goat-boy* are equally products of the apocalyptic imagination. The assumption behind such experiments is that our 'reality' is so extraordinary, horrific or absurd that the methods of conventional realistic imitation are no longer adequate.[1] There is no point in carefully creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life itself seems illusory. (This argument, interestingly, was used by the Marquis de Sade, writing at the time of the French Revolution, to explain the Gothic novel and by implication, his own pornographic contribution to the genre.[1]) Art can no longer compete with life on equal terms, showing the universal in the particular. The alternatives are either to cleave to the particular—to 'tell it like it is'—or to abandon history altogether and construct pure fictions which reflect in an emotional or metaphorical way the discords of contemporary experience.

The realist—and liberal—answer to this case must be that while many aspects of contemporary experience encourage an extreme, apocalyptic response, most of us continue to live most of our lives on the assumption that the reality which realism imitates actually exists. History may be, in a philosophical sense, a fiction, but it does not feel like that when we miss a train or somebody starts a war. We are conscious of ourselves as unique, historic individuals, living together in societies by virtue of certain common assumptions and methods of communication; we are conscious that our sense of identity, of happiness and unhappiness, is defined by small things as well as

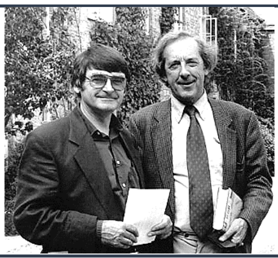


large; we seek to adjust our lives, individually and communally, to some order or system of values which, however, we know is always at the mercy of chance and contingency. It is this sense of reality which realism imitates; and it seems likely that the latter will survive as long as the former.

Writing in 1939, at the beginning of World War II, George Orwell voiced many of the doubts about the future of the novel reviewed in this essay. The novel, he said in 'Inside the Whale' was inextricably tied up with liberal individualism and could not survive the era of totalitarian dictatorships he saw ahead. In his appreciation of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* he seems to endorse the confessional non-fiction novel as the only viable alternative ('Get inside the whale… Give yourself over to the world process, stop fighting against it or pretending you control it, simply accept it, endure it, record it. That seems to be the formula that any sensitive novelist is likely to adopt.') Orwell's prophecy was, however, incorrect. Shortly after the War there was a significant revival of the realistic novel in England, inspired partly by Orwell's own fiction of the 'thirties; and although none of this fiction is of the very first rank, it is not an inconsiderable body of work. Many of the most talented post-war American novelists—John Updike, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth, for example—have worked, for the most part, within the conventions of realistic fiction. Obsequies over the novel may be as premature today as they were in 1939.

[1]See Mario Praz's Introduction to the Penguin *Three Gothic Novels* (1968), p. 14.
* See the quotation from Norman Mailer at the head of this essay. Although I have taken Mailer to represent the non-fiction novel (a vein he has continued to work in *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968)), he has also produced fictions, *An American Dream* (1965) and *Why Are We In Vietnam?* (1967), which lean in the opposite direction, towards fabulation.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism,* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, pp 32-34. "Part I. 1. The Novelist at the Crossroads."



It is noteworthy that novels are not only read and studied more and more in an exclusively academic context, but increasingly (especially in America) written there as well.

I

> Our journal takes its title and its justification from the amazing surge of interest in the novel since the last world war… There has been more work on fictional theory, since the last great war, than in all the novel's previous history; and more intelligent appraisals of novels have appeared than in all its history. At the same time there has been a veritable log-jam of conflicting theories and, along with it, a disturbing increase in irrelevant criticism.

I quote from the first editorial of an enterprising new journal, *Novel: a forum on fiction* (Fall, 1967). After making allowances for the somewhat declamatory tone appropriate to such utterances, it is surely undeniable that the views advanced here are substantially true. There *has* been a remarkable shift of attention in modern literary criticism from poetry and poetic drama to prose fiction, a movement balanced roughly on the fourth decade of this century. Exactly why this has happened is not easy to explain. Is it that the critical revolution of the inter-war period, having exerted its sway over poetry, naturally expanded into the practically virgin territory of the novel? Or does the trend reflect a tardy recognition by literary academics that, in Frank Kermode's words, 'in our phase of civility, the novel is the central form of literary art'? If the latter is the case, 'tardy' might bear a double meaning; for if



we are to believe the McLuhanite prophets, literature in the forms most familiar to us faces obsolescence, as we move from a print-orientated culture to an electronically revived oral-aural culture—a situation in which the novel, historically the product of the printing press, is clearly the most vulnerable of the literary genres.

The editors of *Novel* are inclined to interpret the current boom in novel-criticism as evidence of the continuing vitality of written narrative. One could, however, equally well suggest that literary intellectuals, feeling threatened by the prophets of media revolution, are instinctively rallying to the defence of that literary form which is above all consecrated to the Book. Poetry and drama, after all, have their roots (and, some would say, their very life) in oral-aural and (in the case of drama) non-verbal modes of communication. The period in which they became frozen into the uniformity of print and consumed by the contemplative private reader can be seen as a fairly brief interregnum in man's cultural history. This period, however, spans the entire history of the novel—and also, virtually, of literary criticism as we know it and practise it. The novel is the exemplary *written* fiction, the form on which all those in the arts (among whom I number myself) who believe Gutenberg was not a cultural disaster will tend to rest their case. It is noteworthy that novels are not only read and studied more and more in an exclusively academic context, but increasingly (especially in America) written there as well.

One can perhaps take comfort from the fact that as the novel retreats into academe, academe itself is expanding fast enough to maintain stability. It is not, in any case, my purpose here to deliver another sermon on the text *Is the novel dying?*, but to take a fairly random scoop into the flood of books about the novel now pouring from the presses, with a view to identifying current trends of thought—thus, hopefully, easing the log-jam referred to by the editors of *Novel*, and discriminating what they darkly describe as 'irrelevant' criticism.

This latter task is always a difficult and invidious one. To take a



commonsense view of the matter it would seem that a work of criticism must justify itself on one or both of two grounds: either (1) it is as educative and life-enhancing as some work of the imagination we might have read in its place, or (2) it is an addition to knowledge in the sense that one's understanding and appreciation of certain imaginative works would be significantly weaker without it.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, pp 37-38. "Part II. *Fiction and Criticism.* 2. Waiting for the End: Current Novel Criticism."



All good criticism is a response to language.

To summarize: my position is that all good criticism is a response to language—that is good insofar as it is a sensitive response—whether or not there is any explicit reference to language in the way of quotation and analysis. This applies not only to the 'structural' approach, but to the moral, mythical, historical, psycho-analytical and thematic approaches too; and it explains, I believe, why we can profit from criticism using radically different approaches from our own. Does this mean that any approach is as good as any other? Not quite—I must believe that criticism responsibly aware of its engagement with language is less likely to go seriously wrong than criticism which is not so aware, or which denies the primacy of language in literary matters. But I think we have to admit that any given method is justified by the use made of it by a particular critic. Critical methods do not compete with each other *as methods* (they may of course conflict over the interpretation and evaluation of a particular work)—they complement each other. We can see them as competing only if we pursue some phantom of total accounting. There is no satisfactory total account of a work of literature except the work itself. It is only the work itself that presents *all* its meanings in the most significant and assimilable form. We therefore cannot ask the critic to tell us the 'whole truth' about a novel, any more than we can ask a novelist to tell us the whole truth about life. Criticism does not—cannot—aim to reproduce the work it contemplates. It sets beside this work another work—the critical essay—which is a kind of hybrid formed by the collaboration of the critic with the artist, and which, in this juxtaposition, makes the original yield up some of its secrets.



Criticism, then, cannot avoid being partial and selective.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p 63. "Part II. *Fiction and Criticism*. 3. Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach through Language."



Consciousness is dependent on verbal concepts.

Let me return to something I said earlier; that the notion that consciousness is dependent on verbal concepts is resented because it seems to deny the reality of non-verbal or pre-verbal experience. This is because as living, acting, responding individuals we are conscious of our sensations, desires, fears and choices, but we are not usually conscious of our consciousness of them, and to be doubly conscious in that way, at least all the time, would appear to dissipate the unique significance of what we are experiencing. Thus when we fall in love, we are not conscious that it is only by virtue of possessing a common concept of 'falling in love' that we do so, and if this is pointed out to us we are likely to feel that the spontaneity and integrity of our emotion is impugned. This is a natural reaction, and it may well be that without the illusion from which it derives we should be paralysed as regards action. It does not, however, affect the actual state of affairs.

The case of literature is rather different. In most traditional literature, especially poetry and poetic drama, the 'double consciousness' I have spoken of is deliberately brought into play—the verbal conceptualization of experience is overtly stressed in verbal artifice; so that in reading a Shakespeare sonnet, or beholding a Shakespeare play, for instance, we are simultaneously conscious of being put in touch with a bit of life, presented to us in a particular way, which imposes aesthetic distance on it. Among the various literary forms, this distance is, notoriously, most foreshortened in the novel. No other literary form immerses us so completely in the life it presents; no other form takes such pains to disguise the fact that it is an artefact. There is no need to dwell on the devices



and strategies it uses to this end—solidity of specification, continuity with history, etc.—except to note that they naturally require as medium that kind of written language which we use to record and describe actual events, namely the prose of historiography, essays, letters, diaries, and so forth.

At the same time, the novel, being fictive, is committed to rendering experience with an enhanced sense of order and harmony, and this obligation pulls the novelist in the opposite direction, towards a heightened version of experience and a heightened use of language. Thus the novelist is constantly divided between two imperatives—to create and invent freely, and to observe a degree of realistic decorum.* And it is precisely this dynamic tension that has made the novel the dominant literary form in an age when, as Frank Kermode has pointed out,[1] the paradigms that we impose—that we *must* impose—upon discrete 'reality' come under the maximum degree of sceptical scrutiny.

[1]See Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), especially chapters 5 and 6.

*What I mean by this second imperative can be illustrated by another quotation from Flaubert, writing to a friend in 1856: 'Try, my good fellow, and send me by next Sunday, or sooner if you can, the following morsels of medical information. They are going up the slopes, Homais is looking at the blind man with the bleeding eyes (you know the mask) and he makes him a speech; he uses scientific words, thinks that he can cure him, and gives him his address. It is, of course, necessary that Homais should make a mistake, for the poor beast is incurable. If you have not enough in your medicine-bag to supply me with the material for five or six sturdy lines, draw from Follin and send it to me.' From J.C. Turner, *Gustave Flaubert as seen in his Works and Correspondence* (1895), reprinted by Ellmann and Feidelson, *op.cit.*, p. 243.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, pp 65-66. "Part II. *Fiction and Criticism*. 3. Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach through Language."



We are, perhaps, more in danger of mistaking than neglecting masterpieces.

I

Have we come to handle the *avant–garde* too gently? From the *Lyrical Ballads* to *Ulysses* our literary history is very much a chronicle of revolutionary works hooted and reviled by the literary establishments of their times, appreciated by a small élite of initiates, and belatedly elevated to classic status by succeeding literary establishments. Since the 1920s, however, the time lag between the publication and the public recognition of such works has got shorter and shorter, until now we are, perhaps, more in danger of mistaking than neglecting masterpieces. Part of the reason is the radical change which has overtaken academic criticism in this period: the groves of academe, that were once enclaves of conservative literary taste, are now only too eager to welcome what is new. Another, and perhaps more important reason is that through the development of the mass media and what one might call the boom in the culture market, the 'small élite of initiates' which in the past constituted the only audience for experimental art, good and bad, is now able to bring its influence to bear very swiftly and powerfully on the larger public.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p 161. "Part IV. *Fiction and Modernism*. 8. Objections to William Burroughs."



To bend the existing conventions without breaking them—this is the strenuous and heroic calling of the experimental artist.

V

The function of the *avant-garde* is to win new freedom, new expressive possibilities, for the arts. But these things have to be *won*, have to be fought for; and the struggle is not merely with external canons of taste, but within the artist himself. To bend the existing conventions without breaking them—this is the strenuous and heroic calling of the experimental artist. To break them is too easy.

I believe this principle can be extended to cover not only formal conventions, but also the social conventions that govern the content of public discourse. From the Romantics onwards the revolutionary works have commonly affronted not only their audience's aesthetic standards, but also their moral standards. *Madame Bovary* and *Ulysses*, for example, shocked and dismayed the publics of their respective periods by mentioning the unmentionable. But these works gradually won acceptance because discriminating readers appreciated that their breaches of existing decorums were not lightly or irresponsibly made, and that their authors had substituted for received disciplines and controls, disciplines and controls of their own even more austere and demanding. Much of the work of today's *avant-garde*, including that of Burroughs, carries no such internal guarantee of integrity. Its freedom is stolen, not earned. The end product is hence startling and exciting on the first impression, but ultimately boring.



Finnegans Wake deliberately violates the conventions of language: it seeks to overthrow the law that we can only think and communicate lineally, one thing at a time. Most of us can manage the same trick-we can throw off a Joycean pun once in a while (I offer one free of charge to Mr Burroughs: 'fission chips'). But to produce hundreds and thousands of such puns, as Joyce does, and to weld them all into a complex whole—this is to create not destroy convention, and is a task of staggering difficulty. Similarly, most of us can compose a good obscene joke on occasion, or produce a powerful emotive effect by the use of obscene words; but to give these things authority as public discourse we have to ensure that they will survive the passing of the initial shock—we have not merely to violate, but to recreate the public sensibility, a task requiring precise imaginative control.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, pp 170-171. "Part IV. *Fiction and Modernism*. 8. Objections to William Burroughs."



The American Dream and the Russian Revolution.

In a large, quasi-metaphorical sense all significant American literature is utopian in spirit, and saturated in the myths of paradise lost or regained, either celebrating the potentialities of the American Adam, or brooding over where he went wrong. I don't know enough about Soviet literature to say whether there is any correspondence there, but it seems plausible. At any rate, modern utopias and anti-utopias tend to be modelled on, or projections of, either the United States or Soviet Russia. (*Brave New World* and *1984* are particularly pure examples.) Whether one takes an optimistic or pessimistic view of the future today, therefore, depends very much on whether one regards the American Dream and the Russian Revolution as experiments that have failed or experiments that are still in progress. In due course we may expect to see Mao's China appearing as the model for new utopias and anti-utopias.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p 236. "Part V. *Fiction and Utopia.* 12. Utopia and Criticism: The Radical Longing for Paradise."



The academy has come to dominate criticism.

I suggest that there are three main kinds of critic (and thus of criticism) in the period. The first is the academic, who is attached to a university or similar institution, who writes usually for an implied audience of fellow-academics and/or students, and for whom literature is in some sense a 'subject', a body of knowledge, and the study of it a 'discipline'. The second kind is the creative writer whose criticism is mainly a by-product of his creative work. He is less disinterested than the academic, more concerned to work out in the practice of criticism the aesthetic principles of his own art, and to create a climate of taste and opinion favourable to the reception of that art. He writes in the first place for fellow-artists, but as there are never very many of these he has to draw on a wider audience, either the academic one, or the 'general reader'. The latter is primarily served by the third kind of critic, for whom it is difficult to find a satisfactory name. After considering and rejecting 'professional', 'journalist', 'man of letters', I have decided to call him the 'freelance'. This kind of critic has usually had an academic training and often begins with ambitions to be a creative writer. He may achieve some minor distinction as the latter, but, whether by inclination or default, most of his energies go into the writing of criticism, characteristically in the form of magazine articles and reviews. Sometimes he becomes an editor or literary editor himself. He may borrow from the first kind of critic a sense of literature as a body of knowledge, and from the second kind a sense of the most creative possibilities in contemporary writing, both of which he is in a position to make available to a wider public. Or he may identify primarily with his audience, representing himself as their defender



against the pedantries of academe and the subversions of the *avant-garde*. But his basic commitment is, perhaps, most often to the world of books as a way of life: to the pleasures of reading and to the inexhaustible fascination of the literary world — the rise and fall of reputations, the interweaving of trends and movements, the alliances and rivalries, feuds and conspiracies.

Examples of the first kind of critic are: George Saintsbury, I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis, C. S. Lewis; of the second, Henry James, Robert Bridges, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence; of the third, Middleton Murry, Lytton Strachey, Cyril Connolly, John Lehmann. Obviously the compartments are not water-tight. It is not uncommon for one man to combine two of these roles. Both academics and creative writers use freelance media for their criticism on occasion, while creative writers and freelances are sometimes invited to address academic audiences. In the last ten years or so this fluidity has become very marked, and there are now quite a large number of critics who combine all three roles; that is, they are academics concerned with teaching and research who are also actively involved in creative writing and regular contributors to newspapers, magazines and broadcasting. In this way the academy has come to dominate criticism and to exercise an ever-increasing influence over the production of literature. Such a literary situation (which has in many ways gone further in America) is unprecedented and, in the eyes of many, sinister. It is certainly one of the most important consequences of the revolution in criticism that is the subject of this essay.

from *The Novelist at the Crossroads, and other essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, pp 247-248. "Part VI. 14. Crosscurrents in Modern English Criticism."

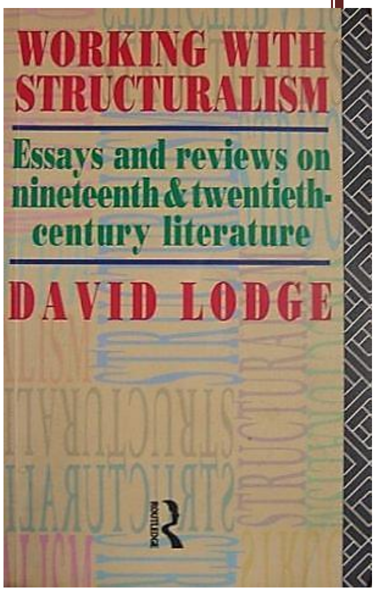


Working with Structuralism.

Essays and reviews
on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.

1981

Routledge London and New York, 1981



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The University of Bucharest. 2015

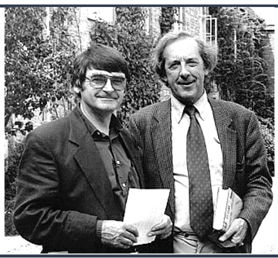


Classifying and analysing ..., and even a certain amount of jargon.

One prejudice against professors of English is that there is nothing particularly difficult about what they profess. The other is that in trying to make it appear difficult, they spoil the innocent pleasure of ordinary people who know what they like and enjoy reading. It is all too easy to find examples of this attitude to academic criticism. Let me quote a celebrated modern writer, D. H. Lawrence:

> Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising. Criticism can never be a science: it is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. The touchstone is emotion, not reason. We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon.

I suspect that quite a few of my readers may have a secret—or not so secret—sympathy with Lawrence's sentiments; but I must try to persuade them that he is wrong—or at least, wrong in his conclusion. For the passage I quoted, which opens Lawrence's 1928 essay on John Galsworthy, is deeply characteristic of the author in the way it becomes increasingly polemical and extreme as it goes on. The opening proposition is fair enough: 'Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising.' But I would maintain—and I think most academic literary critics



would share this view – that if the critical account is to be, in Lawrence's word, 'reasoned', it must involve the classifying and analysing which he dismissed so contemptuously, and even a certain amount of jargon.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, p 3. "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."



Antimodernist art ... aspires to the condition of history.

The emergence of the modernist novel was a little slower and more gradual, because of the impressive achievement of the realistic novel in the nineteenth century. What seems to happen, first in France, and then in England in the work of James, Conrad, Joyce, and in his own idiosyncratic way Lawrence, is that the effort to capture reality in narrative fiction, pursued with a certain degree of intensity, brings the writer out on the other side of 'realism'. The writer's prose style, however sordid, and banal the experience it is supposed to be mediating, is so highly and lovingly polished that it ceases to be transparent but calls attention to itself by the brilliant reflections glancing from its surfaces. Then, pursuing reality out of the daylight world of empirical common sense into the individual's consciousness, or subconscious, and ultimately the collective unconscious, discarding the traditional narrative structures of chronological succession and logical cause-and-effect, as being false to the essentially chaotic and problematic nature of subjective experience, the novelist finds himself relying more and more on literary strategies and devices that belong to poetry, and specifically to Symbolist poetry, rather than to prose: allusion to literary models and mythical archetypes, for instance, and the repetition of images, symbols, and other motifs—what E. M. Forster described, with another gesture towards music, as 'rhythm' in the novel.

This characterisation of modernist poetry and fiction is familiar enough: but not all writing in the modern period is modern*ist.* There is at least one other kind of writing in this period which, for want of a better term, I have designated in my title as antimodernist. This is writing that continues the tradition



modernism reacted against. It believes that traditional realism, suitably modified to take account of changes in human knowledge and material circumstances, is still viable and valuable. Antimodernist art does not aspire to the condition of music; rather it aspires to the condition of history. Its prose does not approximate to poetry; rather its poetry approximates to prose. It regards literature as the communication of a reality that exists prior to and independent of the act of communication. To Wilde's half-serious assertion that our perception of fog derives from the Impressionists, the antimodernist would reply that on the contrary it derives from industrial capitalism, which built large cities and polluted their atmosphere with coal-smoke, and that it is the job of the writer to make this causal connection clear; or, if he must dwell on the picturesque distorting visual effects of fog, at least to make them symbols of a more fundamental denaturing of human life, as Dickens did. Antimodernist writing, then, gives priority to content, and is apt to be impatient with formal experiment, which obscures and hinders communication. The model of language it implies is the antithesis of Saussure's and may be represented by George Orwell's advice to writers in his essay 'Politics and the English Language':

> What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word and not the other way about . . . Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meaning as clear as one can through pictures or sensations . . . afterwards one can choose—not simply accept—the phrases that will best cover the meaning . . .

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 6-7. "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."



Eliot and Joyce

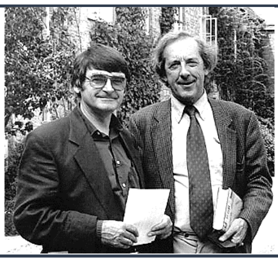
Consider, as two representative works of modernist writing, *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses:* both titles are metaphorical and invite a metaphorical reading of texts. Eliot's poem, indeed, can be read in no other way. Its fragments are linked together entirely on the basis of similarity and ironic contrast (a negative kind of similarity), scarcely at all on the basis of narrative cause and effect or contiguity in space-time. *Ulysses* does have a story—an everyday story of Dublinfolk, one might say; but this story echoes and parallels another one—the story of Homer's *Odyssey*, Bloom re-enacting or parodying the part of Odysseus, Stephen that of Telemachus and Molly that of Penelope. The structure of Joyce's novel is therefore essentially metaphorical based on a similarity between things otherwise dissimilar and widely separated in space and time.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, p 11. "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."



Postmodernism

There is, however, another kind of art, another kind of writing, in the modern period, which claims to be neither modernist nor antimodernist, and is sometimes called postmodernist. Historically, it can be traced back as far as the Dada movement which began in Zurich in 1916. Tom Stoppard's entertaining play *Travesties,* set in that time and place, portrays one of the founders of Dadaism, Tristan Tzara, and brings him into entertaining collision with James Joyce and Lenin, representing modernist and antimodernist attitudes to art, respectively. But as a significant force in modern writing, postmodernism is a fairly recent phenomenon, and more evident in America and France than in England, except in the field of drama. Postmodernism continues the modernist critique of traditional realism, but it tries to go beyond or around or underneath modernism, which for all its formal experiment and complexity held out to the reader the promise of meaning, if not of *a* meaning. 'Where is the figure in the carpet?' asks a character in Donald Barthelmes's *Snow White*, alluding to the title of a story by Henry James that has become proverbial among critics as an image of the goal of interpretation; 'Where is the figure in the carpet? Or is it just... carpet?' A lot of postmodernist writing implies that experience is just carpet, and that whatever meaningful patterns we discern in it are wholly illusory, comforting fictions. The difficulty, for the reader, of postmodernist writing is not so much a matter of obscurity, which might be cleared up, as of uncertainty, which is endemic. No amount of patient study could establish, for instance, the identity of the man with the heavy coat and hat and stick encountered by Moran in Beckett's *Molloy*. We shall never be able to unravel



the plots of John Fowles's *The Magus* or Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* or Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* because these novels are labyrinths without exits.

Stated most baldly, Jakobson's theory asserts that any discourse must connect its topics according to either similarity or contiguity, and will usually prefer one type of connection to the other. Postmodernist writing tries to defy this law by seeking some alternative principle of composition. To these alternatives I give the names: Contradiction, Permutation, Discontinuity, Randomness, Excess and The Short Circuit.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 12-13. "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."



Postmodernism tries to resist assimilation into conventional categories of the literary.

The literary text, whether it tends towards a metaphoric or metonymic structure and texture, is always metaphoric in the sense that when we interpret it we may apply it to the world as a total metaphor. According to the author, we say, the world is 'like that'—'that' being *The Waste Land* or *The Old Wives' Tale.* This process of interpretation assumes a gap between the text and the world, between art and life, which postmodernist writing characteristically tries to short–circuit in order to administer a shock to the reader and thus resist assimilation into conventional categories of the literary. Ways of doing this include: combining in one work the apparently factual and the obviously fictional, introducing the author and the question of authorship into the text, and exposing conventions in the act of using them. These metafictional ploys are not themselves discoveries of the postmodernist writers—they are to be found in prose fiction at least as far back as Cervantes and Sterne—but they appear so frequently in postmodernist writing and are pursued to such lengths as to constitute a distinctively new development.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, p 15. "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."



David Lodge: basically antimodernist, but with elements of modernism and postmodernism.

There is considerable disagreement among critics and aestheticians as to whether postmodernism is a really significant and distinctive kind of art, or whether, being an essentially rule-breaking activity, it must always be a minority mode, dependent on a majority of artists trying to keep to the rules. I have not the space to go into these arguments, and in any case it was not my intention to discriminate between the modernist, antimodernist and postmodernist modes in terms of value, but in terms of form. What I hope to have shown is that each mode operates according to different and identifiable formal principles, and that it is therefore pointless to judge one kind of writing by criteria derived from another. To make such distinctions clear, even if it does involve a certain amount of jargon, seems to me to be the proper aim of studying literature in an academic context, and one that is ultimately of service to writers, inasmuch as it broadens the receptivity of readers. And if it has occurred to the reader to wonder where I would place my own fiction in this scheme, I would answer, in the spirit of 'Animal, Vegetable or Mineral'; basically antimodernist, but with elements of modernism and postmodernism. Rummidge is certainly a metonymic place name, but Euphoric State is a metaphor, and the ending of *Changing Places* is a short circuit.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 15-16. "I. Applying Structuralism. 1. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism."



The question I wish to raise ... is whether progress in theory and methodology means progress in the critical reading of texts.

It is a commonplace that the systematic study of narrative was founded by Aristotle, and scarcely an exaggeration to say that little of significance was added to those foundations until the twentieth century. Narrative theory in the intervening period was mainly directed (or misdirected) at deducing from Aristotle's penetrating analysis of the system of Greek tragedy a set of prescriptive rules for the writing of epic. The rise of the novel as a distinctive and eventually dominant literary from finally exposed the poverty of neoclassical narrative theory, without for a long time generating anything much more satisfactory. The realistic novel set peculiar problems for any formalist criticism because it worked by distinguishing or denying its own conventionality. It therefore invited—and received—criticism which was interpretative and evaluative rather than analytical. It was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that something like a poetics of fiction began to evolve from the self-conscious experiments of novelists themselves, and was elaborated by literary critics. At about the same time, developments in linguistics, folklore and anthropology stimulated a more broad-ranging study of narrative, beyond the boundaries of modern literary fiction. For a long time these investigations were pursued on parallel tracks which seldom converged. In the last couple of decades, however, the Anglo-American tradition of formalist criticism, essentially empirical and text-based, theoretically rather underpowered but hermeneutically productive, has encountered the more systematic, abstract, theoretically rigorous and 'scientific' tradition of European



structuralist criticism. The result has been a minor 'knowledge explosion' in the field of narrative theory and poetics of fiction.

The question I wish to raise in this essay is whether progress in theory and methodology means progress in the critical reading of texts. Is it possible, or useful, to bring the whole battery of modern formalism and structuralism to bear upon a single text, and what is gained by doing so? Does it enrich our reading by uncovering depths and nuances of meaning we might not otherwise have brought to consciousness, help us to solve problems of interpretation and to correct misreading? Or does it merely encourage a pointless and self-indulgent academicism, by which the same information is shuffled from one set of categories to another, from one jargon to another, without any real advance in appreciation or understanding? The analysis offered here of a short story by Ernest Hemingway is intended to support a positive answer to the first set of questions, a negative answer to the second set.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 17-18. "I. Applying Structuralism. 2. Analysis and Interpretaion of the Realist Text: Ernest Hemingway's 'Cat in the Rain'."



Even those writers and critics who seek to escape from or deny the historicity of literature do so on grounds that are in one sense of the word, historicist.

Like many terms that we use in the study of literature—including the term *literature* itself—*modern* and *period* are at the same time indispensable and highly problematical. Put together in a single phrase—*the modern period*—they are paradoxical. *Period* implies an end, yet in some senses we still feel that we are living in the modern period. 'When will the Modern Period end?' Ihab Hassan has asked. 'Has ever a period waited so long? When will modernism cease and what comes there-after?'[1] One answer is that the modern period has already ended and that we are now living in the postmodern period. Hassan himself, in the essay from which I quote, makes a useful contribution to the definition of postmodernism, but regards it as a change or development in modernism rather than a decisive break with it. In any case, the question, what comes hereafter, remains. 'The end of periodization? The slow arrival of simultaneity?' are among Hassan's apocalyptic suggestions. The Parisian *savants* of our day would, I think, applaud this prospect. Lévi–Strauss, for instance, has offered the utopian vision of a world in which automation would free man to enjoy all the advantages of a timeless primitive existence and none of its disadvantages: 'Hence-forth history would make itself by itself. Society, placed outside and above history, would be able to exhibit once again that regular and, as it were, crystalline structure which the best preserved of primitive societies teach us is not antagonistic to the human condition.'[2] If such a society read literary texts at all, it would surely approach them in the spirit of the *nouvelle critique,* as

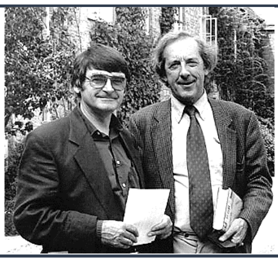


semantic playgrounds rather than as historical expressions or representations.

In such a society, it is safe to assume, there would be no university courses in literature, no scholarly journals, and no MLA Conventions, all of which institutions are heavily dependent on periodization for the conceptual organization of their subject-matter. The question of periodization is therefore part of a larger question about history as a mode of knowledge and its application to literature: is literary history possible, or desirable? I would say that it is certainly unavoidable, in the sense that even those writers and critics who seek to escape from or deny the historicity of literature do so on grounds that are in one sense of the word, historicist.

[1]Ihab Hassan, 'POSTmodernISM: A Practical Bibliography', *New Literary History* 3 (Autumn 1971), p. 7.
[2]Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Scope of Anthropolgy* (London, 1967), p. 49.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 68-69. "I. Applying Structuralism. 5. Historicism and Literary History: Mapping the Modern Period."



Any literary historical account of the Modern period must recognize the coexistence, within its span, of at least two kinds of writing, only one of which is modernist.

I will try to follow these injunctions in briefly outlining my own approach to the modern period in literature.

First of all, I should make clear that I am a novelist as well as a critic, a novelist who has written several books of the kind that Roland Barthes says it is no longer possible to write, i.e. novels that are continuous in technique with 'classic realism'. One reason for this, no doubt, is that I came of age in the 1950s, which happened to be a dominantly antimodernist phase in modern British literary history. There have been other dominantly antimodernist phases, or subperiods, within the larger category of the Modern Period—the 1930s, and, I would suggest, the first decade and a half of this century, between the collapse of the Decadence and the emergence of the Pound-Eliot group as a force in English Letters.

Although I found the neo-realist climate of the 1950s in England congenial to my own early efforts as a novelist, I did not as a *reader* of literature accept the antimodernist polemics of Amis, Wain, Snow, Larkin and other representative figures of the time. James, Yeats, and Joyce gave me my most rewarding and exciting literary experiences when I was a student and continued to do so when I became a teacher. As far as I am concerned, therefore, any literary historical account of the Modern period must recognize the coexistence, within its span, of at least two kinds of writing, only one of which is modernist.



from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, p 72. "I. Applying Structuralism. 5. Historicism and Literary History: Mapping the Modern Period."

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The concept of a period, whether in history at large or in literary history, is not a fact, but an interpretation.

Prediction seems particularly hazardous at present, because it is difficult to say what the dominant literary mode is now, certainly in England, and perhaps in America, or to place it on the metaphor-metonymy axis. This may be a familiar problem of perspective, that we are too close to our own art to distinguish the important from the trivial. Or it could be that our liveliest writers, having consciously or intuitively grasped the structural principles of the literary system, have ganged up to cheat it: refusing to choose between a dominantly metaphoric or metonymic mode of writing, they employ both, in extreme, contradictory, often absurd or parodic ways, within the same work or body of work. If this is the case, it would be consistent with another of Popper's axioms, namely, that in the field of human culture prediction is impossible because, however well-founded, it is bound to provoke actions designed to upset it.

To sum up: the concept of a period, whether in history at large or in literary history, is not a fact, but an interpretation, a human selection and grouping of facts for human purposes, collectively generated and modified by an endless process of redescription. A distinctively *literary* history ought to be founded in the description of literary form, but there is no single characterization of literary form that will account for all that is literature in the modern period. If there is one modern period that begins some time in the late nineteenth century and still goes on, the terms of its definition must be sought beyond boundaries of the arts, in the alteration of human consciousness by developments in science, applied science, philosophy, and psychology. Different writers and groups of writers have responded to the



experience of this larger modernity in different ways at different times and places. There is no single period style for the modern period, but a variety of styles. But this variety can be reduced to an intelligible order if we refer it to what is constant and finite in literature as a signifying system, mapping the diachronic on the grid of the synchronic.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 74-75. "I. Applying Structuralism. 5. Historicism and Literary History: Mapping the Modern Period."



Literary biography.

The critical suspicion of literary biography derives from the fear that it imposes an oversimplified cause-and-effect model on the process of literary creation. If the author is seen as the Cause and his work as the Effect, there is an obvious danger that the former may come to seem more important than the latter, and that the biographer, equipped with special knowledge about the author, may claim proprietorial rights in the interpretation of the work. Is our appreciation/understanding of Shakespeare's plays as art impaired because we know relatively little about his life? Would it be enhanced if we knew more? The answer would seem to be negative in both cases. The next stage is to argue that since biographical information is clearly not *essential* to criticism, we are better off without it; and in the more extreme New or *nouvelle* criticism biographical information is treated as something to be purged (like heresy) or indulged covertly (like pornography). It is, however, unnecessary to go to such lengths to avoid error. There is a very simple and obvious way in which literary biography helps us to understand and appreciate a writer's work without necessarily imposing a narrowly genetic approach to it, and that is by giving us some sense of the context—human, cultural, social, historical—in which that work was originally produced and consumed. While it is true that we can never recover that context in its entirety, we cannot read a work of literature meaningfully without some attempt to reconstruct it, and literary biography can play a valuable part in making us aware of all the unspoken, unformulated assumptions and values that underlie a writer's relationship to his audience at any particular moment, and that fade with the passing of time.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, p 118. "III. Aspects of Waugh. 9. Evelyn Waugh: Habits of a Lifetime."

The ending of a novel is the very point at which every reader, however naïve, must recognise that it is not reality but an imitation of it, not a slice of life but a statement about it.

In realistic fiction, the illusion of life is created principally according to the logic of events, and the task of the writer is, therefore, to construct as perfect a 'fit' as possible between the logic of events and the logic of coherence, or to disguise the latter under the appearance of the former. That is why the suggestion or revelation of alternative endings in the classic realistic novel, such as *Great Expectations* or *Villette*, imparts a *frisson* of shock or scandal to the reader. The ending of a novel is the very point at which every reader, however naïve, must recognise that it is not reality but an imitation of it, not a slice of life but a statement about it; and this recognition is made relatively easy and reassuring if there is a perfect fit between the two logics, like the seam between a glove and its lining. The well–made classic novel, like a glove, can be turned inside out and back again by the interpreting reader, changing its aspect, but still retaining the same shape. Problematical endings are like gaping seams: they indicate the stress points in the manufactured article.

Cases like *A Clockwork Orange* and *A Handful of Dust* are anecdotally interesting, but they are, I think, less significant as regards what they tell us about the literary situation at large than the Victorian examples of alternative or ambiguous endings. With the acceptance of the open ending in modern fiction, the ending which is satisfying but not final, the recognition of ambiguity or uncertainty in experience is institutionalised as form. Even this kind of ending, however, can seem too comfortable or consoling in its endorsement of



the commonplace that life, somehow or another, goes on; and insufficiently self-conscious about its own conventionality. The open ending, like the closed ending, still, after all, asserts the existence of *an* order, rather than a plurality of orders, or an absence of order; and it still makes a claim for the fiction's realism, verisimilitude, or 'truth to life'. These claims have been strongly challenged by many contemporary novelists sometimes designated postmodernist. Instead of the closed ending or the open ending, we get from them the multiple ending, the false ending, the mock ending or the parody ending. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* belongs to this category.[1]

[1]So, perhaps, does my own novel *Changing Places* (1975), the last chapter of which teases the reader by examining every possible resolution of the four-cornered sexual plot but refuses to commit itself to any of them. This is perhaps and appropriate place to acknowledge that my reading of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Sense of an Ending* certainly influenced the writing of this chapter. And it may be some indication of the stubborn conservatism of the reading public that the only criticism of this novel which has been expressed with any regularity in reviews and private comment is a complaint about the radical inconclusiveness of the ending.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 153-154. "IV. Fiction and the Reading Public. 11. Ambiguously Ever After: Problematical Endings in English Fiction."



The novelist's 'capital'.

The novelist risks his 'capital'—his experience, his imagination, his verbal skill, his time (a lot of that), his nervous energy, his psychological privacy and his self–esteem in the construction of an artefact, a fictional text which he takes to the market place, hoping someone will pay him for the right to reproduce and sell it, and that others will, at a second remove, pay him for the privilege of reading it. Nobody has asked him to write it. No one is born into or brought up to novel-writing as a trade or calling. Writing a novel is a gratuitous act, like Robinson Crusoe running away from his comfortable home to make his fortune. It is an intensely individualistic and competitive activity, which is why attempts at co–operative publishing ventures nearly always fail. The New York Fiction Collective, Dr Sutherland touchingly records, held 'consciousness-raising sessions designed to eliminate the counterproductive addiction to "success." ' Vain endeavour! Novelists are driven by the dream of personal success (why else would they persist in such a difficult, laborious, psychologically taxing activity?) and their relationships with their peers usually include strong feelings of rivalry. They compare jealously advances, sales, terms of contract. They deeply resent—even socialist novelists deeply resent—paying income tax on their writing earnings, and often get into serious difficulties on this account. I do not mean to imply that novelists are a peculiarly mercenary group of writers. It is simply that they recognise (in a way which I suspect is not true of poets) that their fortune in the market—the readiness of strangers to risk or expend money on their creative work—is a significant criterion of achievement. Not the only one, of course—we also want to be loved, respected, praised by



the discerning (we are insatiable)—but an essential one, because an objective one. Indeed I believe most novelists, even 'literary' ones, would, forced to choose, prefer to be judged by the market (assuming it is free from censorship) than by any other institution. One reason, after all, why novelists are so ill–rewarded, on the whole, for their labours, is that there are too many of us, too many manuscripts for publishers to choose from, too many titles for bookshops and literary editors to cope with, too many novels for customers to buy.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, pp 162-163. "IV. Fiction and the Reading Public. 12. Turning Unhappiness into Money: Fiction and the Market."



The literary market.

The literary market, then, has functioned historically not merely as a means of material production and distribution of prose fiction, but a as a kind of sounding board for the novelist's own sense of his literary identity and achievement. But the literary market can fulfil that function only as long as it is accessible to all works of merit. It may produce a great deal of rubbish, but it must not exclude the good. There must be a general faith that, sooner or later, any novel of real value will find a publisher. I personally believe that this is still true of the British publishing world. But it may not be true of America, and, if present trends continue, it may one day no longer be the case here. *That* will be the real crisis for publishing and for the novel.

from *Working with Structuralism. Essays and reviews on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature*, Routledge London and New York, 1981, p 163. "IV. Fiction and the Reading Public. 12. Turning Unhappiness into Money: Fiction and the Market."

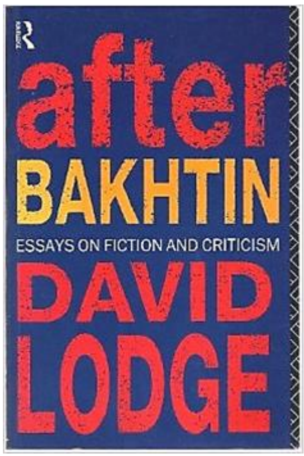


After Bakhtin.

Essays on fiction and criticism.

1990

Routledge London and New York, 1990





The professionalization of academic criticism has opened up a widening gap between it and 'lay' discussion of literature.

I have always regarded myself as having a foot in both camps—the world of academic scholarship and higher education, and the world of literary culture at large, in which books are written, published, discussed and consumed for profit and pleasure in all senses of those words. Over many years I have published a book of criticism and a work of fiction in alternation. I took a keen interest in the developments in literary theory that arose out of European structuralism—learned from them, applied them, domesticated and cannibalized them in criticism and literary journalism, and satirized and carnivalized them in my novels, all in an effort (not always conscious) to encourage the circulation of ideas between the two worlds of discourse. But undoubtedly this bridging posture has become increasingly difficult to maintain as the professionalization of academic criticism has opened up a widening gap between it and 'lay' discussion of literature.

A few years ago, for a number of converging reasons, I retired from my post at the University of Birmingham, to pursue the career of a freelance writer. I retain an honorary academic title, I still keep up my university contacts, and give the occasional lecture or conference paper. But inevitably I feel myself drifting away from the academic institution, and its institutional stimuli, satisfactions and incentives. Without them, a lot of academic literary criticism and theory—the kind published in learned journals and by American university presses—frankly no longer seems worth the considerable effort of keeping up with it. A vast



amount of it is not, like the work of Bakhtin, a contribution to human knowledge, but the demonstration of a professional mastery by translating known facts into more and more arcane metalanguages. This is not an entirely pointless activity—it sharpens the wits and tests the stamina of those who produce and consume such work—but it seems less and less relevant to my own writing practice. Though I intend to go on writing literary criticism, I doubt whether it will be 'academic' in the way most of the essays included in this book are academic. If the title *After Bakhtin* has a faintly elegiac ring, then, that is not entirely inappropriate.

from *After Bakhtin. Essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge London and New York, 1990, pp 7-8. Introduction



Art lives and develops by deviating unpredictably from aesthetic norms.

How does one begin to map a field as vast, as various as modern fiction? It seems a hopeless endeavor, and, in an absolute sense, it *is* hopeless. Even if one could hold all the relevant data in one's head at one time—which one cannot—and could formulate a typology into which they would all fit, some novelist would soon produce a work that eluded all one's categories, because art lives and develops by deviating unpredictably from aesthetic norms. Nevertheless the effort to generalize, to classify, has to be made; for without some conceptual apparatus for grouping and separating literary fictions criticism could hardly claim to be knowledge, but would be merely the accumulation of opinions about one damn novel after another. This is the justification for literary history, particularly that kind of literary history which has a generic or formal bias, looking for common conventions, strategies, techniques, beneath the infinite variety of subject matter. Such literary history breaks up the endless stream of literary production into manageable blocks or bundles, called 'periods' or 'schools' or 'movements' or 'trends' or 'subgenres'.

We are all familiar with a rough division of the fiction of the last 150 years into three phases, that of classic realism, that of modernism and that of post-modernism (though, it hardly needs saying, these phases overlap both chronologically and formally). And we are familiar with various attempts to break down these large, loose groupings into more delicate and discriminating subcategories. In the case of post-modernist fiction, for instance: transfiction, surfiction, metafiction, new journalism, nonfiction novel, faction, fabulation,



nouveau roman, *nouveau nouveau roman*, irrealism, magic realism, and so on. Some of those terms are synonyms, or nearly so. Most of them invoke or imply the idea of the new. British writing rarely figures on such maps of post-modern fiction. Our post-modernism, it is widely believed, has consisted in ignoring, rather than trying to go beyond, the experiments of modernism, reviving and perpetuating the mode of classic realism which Joyce, Woolf and Co. thought they had despatched for good.

This kind of map-making usually has an ideological and, in the Popperian sense of the word, historicist motivation. The mode of classic realism, with its concern for coherence and causality in narrative structure, for the autonomy of the individual self in the presentation of character, for a readable homogeneity and urbanity of style, is equated with liberal humanism, with empiricism, common sense and the presentation of bourgeois culture as a kind of nature. The confusions, distortions and disruptions of the post-modernist text, in contrast, reflect a view of the world as not merely subjectively constructed (as modernist fiction implied) but as absurd, meaningless, radically resistant to totalizing interpretation.

There is a certain truth in this picture, but it is a half-truth, and therefore a misleading one. The classic realist text was never as homogeneous, as consistent as the model requires; nor do post-modern novelists divide as neatly as it implies into complacent neorealist sheep and dynamic antirealist goats. (It hardly needs to be said that the ideology of the post-modernist avant-garde, reversing proverbial wisdom, prefers goats to sheep, John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* being one of its canonical texts.) Perhaps I have a personal interest in this issue, since I write as well as read contemporary fiction. I am dissatisfied with maps of contemporary fiction which take into account only the most deviant and marginal kinds of writing, leaving all the rest white space. But equally unsatisfactory is the bland, middlebrow, market-oriented reviewing of novels in newspapers and magazines which not only shies away from boldly experimental writing, but makes what one might call mainstream fiction seem technically less interesting and innovative than



it often is.

from *After Bakhtin. Essays on fiction and criticism*, Routledge London and New York, 1990, pp 25-26.
"2. Mimesis and diegesis in modern fiction."

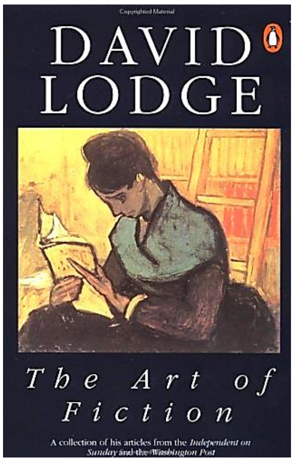


The Art of Fiction.

Illustrated from classic and modern texts.

1992

Penguin Books, London, 1992





The intrusive authorial voice.

We read fiction, after all, not just for the story, but to enlarge our knowledge and understanding of the world, and the authorial narrative method is particularly suited to incorporating this kind of encyclopedic knowledge and proverbial wisdom.

Around the turn of the century, however, the intrusive authorial voice fell into disfavour, partly because it detracts from realistic illusion and reduces the emotional intensity of the experience being represented, by calling attention to the act of narrating. It also claims a kind of authority, a God-like omniscience, which our sceptical and relativistic age is reluctant to grant to anyone. Modern fiction has tended to suppress or eliminate the authorial voice, by presenting the action through the consciousness of the characters, or by handing over to them the narrative task itself. When the intrusive authorial voice *is* employed in modern fiction, it's usually with a certain ironic self-consciousness.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p 10. "2. The Intrusive Author *(George Eliot, E. M. Forster)*."



Narrative, whatever its medium—words, film, strip-cartoon—holds the interest of an audience by raising questions in their minds, and delaying the answers.

Novels are narratives, and narrative, whatever its medium—words, film, strip-cartoon—holds the interest of an audience by raising questions in their minds, and delaying the answers. The questions are broadly of two kinds, having to do with causality (e.g. whodunnit?) and temporality (e.g. what will happen next?) each exhibited in a very pure form by the classic detective story and the adventure story, respectively. Suspense is an effect especially associated with the adventure story, and with the hybrid of detective story and adventure story known as the thriller. Such narratives are designed to put the hero or heroine repeatedly into situations of extreme jeopardy, thus exciting in the reader emotions of sympathetic fear and anxiety as to the outcome.

Because suspense is particularly associated with popular forms of fiction it has often been despised, or at least demoted, by literary novelists of the modern period. In *Ulysses*, for instance, James Joyce superimposed the banal and inconclusive events of a day in modern Dublin upon the heroic and satisfyingly closed story of Odysseus's return from the Trojan War, implying that reality is less exciting and more indeterminate than traditional fiction would have us believe.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p 14. "3. Suspense *(Thomas Hardy)*."



A fictional story is unlikely to engage our interest unless we know whose story it is.

A real event may be—and usually is—experienced by more than one person, simultaneously. A novel can provide different perspectives on the same event—but only one at a time. And even if it adopts an "omniscient" narrative method, reporting the action from a God-like altitude, it will usually privilege just one or two of the possible "points of view" from which the story could be told, and concentrate on how events affect *them*. Totally objective, totally impartial narration may be a worthy aim in journalism or historiography, but a fictional story is unlikely to engage our interest unless we know whose story it is.

The choice of the point(s) of view from which the story is told is arguably the most important single decision that the novelist has to make, for it fundamentally affects the way readers will respond, emotionally and morally, to the fictional characters and their actions. The story of an adultery, for instance,—any adultery—will affect us differently according to whether it is presented primarily from the point of view of the unfaithful person, or the injured spouse, or the lover—or as observed by some fourth party. *Madame Bovary* narrated mainly from the point of view of Charles Bovary would be a very different book from the one we know.

Henry James was something of a virtuoso in the manipulation of point of view.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p 26. "6. Point of View *(Henry James)*."

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Modern literary novelists, in contrast, wary of neat solutions and happy endings, have tended to invest their mysteries with an aura of ambiguity and to leave them unresolved.

One of the staple ingredients of traditional romance, for example, was mystery concerning the origins and parentage of characters, invariably resolved to the advantage of the hero and/or heroine, a plot motif that persists deep into nineteenth-century fiction and is still common in popular fiction today (in literary fiction it tends to be used parodically, as in Anthony Burgess's *M/F*, or my own *Small World*). Victorian novelists like Dickens and Wilkie Collins exploited mystery in connection with crimes and misdemeanours, leading eventually to the evolution of a separate subgenre, the classic detective story of Conan Doyle and his successors.

A solved mystery is ultimately reassuring to readers, asserting the triumph of reason over instinct, of order over anarchy, whether in the tales of Sherlock Holmes or in the case histories of Sigmund Freud which bear such a striking and suspicious resemblance to them. That is why mystery is an invariable ingredient of popular narrative, whatever its form—prose fiction or movies or television soaps. Modern literary novelists, in contrast, wary of neat solutions and happy endings, have tended to invest their mysteries with an aura of ambiguity and to leave them unresolved. We never discover for certain what Maisie knew about her adult relations' sexual behaviour, whether Conrad's Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* was a tragic hero or a human devil, or which of the alternative endings of John Fowles' *The French Lieutenants' Woman* is the "true" one.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p 31. "7. Mystery *(Rudyard Kipling)*."



Naming the characters.

...in naming the characters I was looking for names that would seem "natural" enough to mask their symbolic appropriateness. I named the man Vic Wilcox to suggest, beneath the ordinariness and Englishness of the name, a rather aggressive, even coarse masculinity (by association with *victor*, *will* and *cock*), and I soon settled on Penrose for the surname of my heroine for its contrasting connotations of literature and beauty (*pen* and *rose*). I hesitated for some time, however, about the choice of her first name, vacillating between Rachel, Rebecca and Roberta, and I remember that this held up progress on Chapter Two considerably, because I couldn't imaginatively inhabit this character until her name was fixed. Eventually I discovered in a dictionary of names that Robin or Robyn is sometimes used as a familiar form of Roberta. An androgynous name seemed highly appropriate to my feminist and assertive heroine, and immediately suggested a new twist to the plot: Wilcox would be expecting a male Robin to turn up at his factory.

About halfway through writing the novel I realized that I had selected for Vic, perhaps by the same mental route as E. M Forster, the surname of the chief male character in *Howards End*, Henry Wilcox – another man of business who becomes enamoured of an intellectual woman. Rather than change my hero's name, I incorporated *Howards End* into the intertextual level of the novel, emphasizing the parallels between the two books—by, for instance, the legend on the tee-shirt of Robyn's student, Marion, "ONLY CONNECT" (the epigraph to Forster's novel). And why Marion? Perhaps because she is a "maid" whose innocence and virtue Robyn (cf. Robin Hood) is anxious to protect, perhaps



because the young, as it were potential, George Eliot (who figures prominently in Robyn's teaching) was called Marian Evans. I say "perhaps" because authors are not always conscious of their motivation in these matters.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp 37-38. "8. Names *(David Lodge, Paul Auster)*.'



The stream-of-consciousness novel.

The classic nineteenth-century novel, from Jane Austen to George Eliot, combined the presentation of its characters as social beings with a subtle and sensitive analysis of their moral and emotional inner lives. Towards the turn of the century, however (you can see it happening in Henry James), reality was increasingly located in the private, subjective consciousness of individual selves, unable to communicate the fullness of their experience to others. It has been said that the stream-of-consciousness novel is the literary expression of solipsism, the philosophical doctrine that nothing is certainly real except one's own existence; but we could equally well argue that it offers us some relief from that daunting hypothesis by offering us imaginative access to the inner lives of other human beings, even if they are fictions.

Undoubtedly this kind of novel tends to generate sympathy for the characters whose inner selves are exposed to view, however vain, selfish or ignoble their thoughts may occasionally be; or, to put it another way, continuous immersion in the mind of a wholly unsympathetic character would be intolerable for both writer and reader.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p 42. "9. The Stream of Consciousness *(Virginia Woolf)*."

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Representing consciousness in prose fiction.

There are two staple techniques for representing consciousness in prose fiction. One is interior monologue, in which the grammatical subject of the discourse is an "I", and we, as it were, overhear the character verbalizing his or her thoughts as they occur. I shall discuss this method in the next section. The other method, called free indirect style, goes back at least as far as Jane Austen, but was employed with ever-increasing scope and virtuosity by modern novelists like Woolf. It renders thought as reported speech (in the third person, past tense) but keeps to the kind of vocabulary that is appropriate to the character, and deletes some of the tags, like "she thought", "she wondered", "she asked herself" etc. that a more formal narrative style would require. This gives the illusion of intimate access to a character's mind, but without totally surrendering authorial participation in the discourse.

"Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself," is the first sentence of the novel: the statement of an authorial narrator, but an impersonal and inscrutable one, who does not explain who Mrs Dalloway is or why she needed to buy flowers. This abrupt plunging of the reader into the middle of an ongoing life (we gradually piece together the heroine's biography by a process of inference) typifies the presentation of consciousness as a "stream". The next sentence, "For Lucy had her work cut out for her," moves the focus of the narrative into the character's mind by adopting free indirect style, omitting an intrusive authorial tag, such as "Mrs Dalloway reflected"; referring to the maid familiarly by her first name, as Mrs Dalloway herself would, not by her function; and using a casual, colloquial expression, "cut out



for her", that belongs to Mrs Dalloway's own style of speech. The third sentence has the same form. The fourth moves back slightly towards an authorial manner to inform us of the heroine's full name, as well as her pleasure in the fine summer morning: "And then, *thought Clarissa Dalloway*, what a morning- fresh air as if issued to children on a beach." (Italics mine.)

The ejaculations, "What a lark! What a plunge!" that follow look superficially like interior monologue, but they are not the mature heroine's responses to the morning in Westminster as she goes out to buy flowers. She is remembering herself at the age of eighteen remembering herself as a child. Or, to put it another way, the image "fresh as if issued to children on a beach", evoked by the Westminster morning, reminds her of how similar metaphors, of children larking in the sea, would come to mind as she "plunged" into the fresh, calm air of a summer morning, "like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave," at Bourton (some country house, we presume), where she would meet someone called Peter Walsh (the first hint of anything like a story). The actual and the metaphorical, time present and times past, interweave and interact in the long, meandering sentences, each thought or memory triggering the next. Realistically, Clarissa Dalloway cannot always trust her memory: " 'Musing among the vegetables?' — was that it? — 'I prefer men to cauliflowers'— was that it?"

Meandering the sentences may be, but they are, apart from the licence of free indirect style, well-formed and elegantly cadenced. Virginia Woolf has smuggled some of her own lyrical eloquence into Mrs Dalloway's stream of consciousness without its being obvious. Transpose these sentences into the first person, and they would sound far too literary and considered to pass for a transcription of someone's random thoughts. They would sound indeed like *writing*, in a rather precious style of autobiographical reminiscence:

> What a lark! What a plunge! For so it always seemed to me when, with a little squeak of the hinges,which I can hear now, I burst open the French windows and plunged



> at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as I then was) solemn, feeling as I did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen …

The interior monologues of Virginia Woolf's later novel, *The Waves*, suffer from such artificiality, to my mind. James Joyce was a more resourceful exponent of that way of rendering the stream of consciousness.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p 43-45. "9. The Stream of Consciousness *(Virginia Woolf)*."



For the reader, it's rather like wearing earphones plugged into someone's brain.

The title of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is a clue—the only absolutely unmissable one in the entire text—that its account of a fairly ordinary day in Dublin, 16 June 1094, re-enacts, mimics or travesties the story of Homer's *Odyssey* (whose hero, Odysseus, was called Ulysses in Latin). Leopold Bloom, middle-aged Jewish advertising canvasser, is the unheroic hero, whose wife Molly falls far short of her prototype, Penelope, in faithfulness to her spouse. After crossing and recrossing the city of Dublin on various inconclusive errands, as Odysseus was blown around the Mediterranean by adverse winds on his way home from the Trojan war, Bloom meets and paternally befriends Stephen Dedalus, the Telemachus of the tale, and a portrait of Joyce's own, younger self—a proud, penniless aspirant writer, alienated from his father.

Ulysses is a psychological rather than a heroic epic. We become acquainted with the principal characters not by being told about them, but by sharing their most intimate thoughts, represented as silent, spontaneous, unceasing streams of consciousness. For the reader, it's rather like wearing earphones plugged into someone's brain, and monitoring an endless tape-recording of the subject's impressions, reflections, questions, memories and fantasies, as they are triggered either by physical sensations or the association of ideas. Joyce was not the first writer to use interior monologue (he credited the invention to an obscure French novelist of the late nineteenth century, Edouard Dujardin), nor the last, but he brought it to a pitch of perfection that makes other exponents, apart from Faulkner and Beckett, look rather feeble in



comparison.

Interior monologue is indeed a very difficult technique to use successfully, all too apt to impose a painfully slow pace on the narrative and to bore the reader with a plethora of trivial detail. Joyce avoids these pitfalls partly by his sheer genius with words, which renders the most commonplace incident or object as riveting as if we had never encountered them before, but also by cleverly varying the grammatical structure of his discourse, combining interior monologue with free indirect style and orthodox narrative description.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp 47-48. "10. Interior Monologue *(James Joyce)*."



The way to tell a story.

The simplest way to tell a story, equally favoured by tribal bards and parents at bedtime, is to begin at the beginning, and go on until you reach the end, or your audience falls asleep. But even in antiquity, storytellers perceived the interesting effects that could be obtained by deviating from chronological order. The classical epic began *in medias res*, in the midst of the story. For example, the narrative of *Odyssey* begins halfway through the hero's hazardous voyage home from the Trojan War, loops back to describe his earlier adventures, then follows the story to its conclusion in Ithaca.

Through time-shift, narrative avoids presenting life as just one damn thing after another, and allows us to make connections of causality and irony between widely separated events. A shift of narrative focus back in time may change our interpretation of something which happened much later in the chronology of the story, but which we have already experienced as readers of the text.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp74-75. "16. Time-Shift (*Muriel Spark*)."



Eliot's praise of *Ulysses* — part acknowledgement, and part manifesto.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is probably the most celebrated and influential example of intertextuality in modern literature. When it appeared in 1922, T.S. Eliot hailed Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* as a structural device, "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity", as an exciting technical breakthrough, "a step towards making the modern world possible for art." Since Eliot has been reading Joyce's novel in serial form over the preceding years, while working on his own great poem "The Waste Land", also published in 1922, in which he manipulated a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and the Grail legend, we may interpret his praise of *Ulysses* as part acknowledgement, and part manifesto. But in neither work is intertextuality limited to one source, or to structural parallelism. "The Waste Land" echoes many different sources; *Ulysses* is full of parody, pastiche, quotations from and allusions to all kinds of texts. There is, for instance, a chapter set in a newspaper office, divided into sections with headlines that mimic the development of journalistic style, a chapter written largely in a pastiche of cheap women's magazines, and another, set in a maternity hospital, that parodies the historical development of English prose from the Anglo-Saxon period to the twentieth century.

Since I combined writing fiction with an academic career for nearly thirty years it is not surprising that my own novels became increasingly intertextual; and, as it happens, both Joyce and Eliot were significant influences in this respect, especially the former. The parodies in *The British*



Museum is Falling Down were inspired by the example of *Ulysses*, as was its one-day action, and the last chapter is a rather cheeky *hommage* to Molly Bloom's monologue. The "break-through" point in the genesis of *Small World* came when I perceived the possibility of basing a comic-satiric novel about the academic jet-set, zooming round the world to international conferences where they competed with each other both professionally and erotically, on the story of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table and their quest for the Grail, especially as interpreted by Jessie L. Weston in a book that T. S. Eliot had raided for "The Waste Land". I have written elsewhere about the genesis of these novels (in the Afterword to *The British Museum* and in *Write On*) and mention them here to make the point that intertextuality is not, or not necessarily, a merely decorative addition to a text, but sometimes a crucial factor in its conception and composition.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp 101-102. "21. Intertextuality (*Joseph Conrad*)"



Kazuo Ishiguro, ***The Remains of the Day.***

The point of using an unreliable narrator is indeed to reveal in an interesting way the gap between appearance and reality, and to show how human beings distort or conceal the latter. This need not be a conscious, mischievous, intention on their part. The narrator of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel is not an evil man, but his life has been based on the suppression and evasion of the truth, about himself and about others. His narrative is a kind of confession, but it is riddled with devious self-justification and special pleading, and only at the very end does he arrive at an understanding of himself—too late to profit by it.

The frame-story is set in 1956. The narrator is Stevens, the ageing butler of an English stately home, once the seat of Lord Darlington, now the property of a rich American. Encouraged by his new employer, Stevens takes a short holiday in the West Country. His private motive is to make contact with Miss Kenton, housekeeper at Darlington Hall in its great days between the Wars, when Lord Darlington hosted unofficial gatherings of high-ranking politicians to discuss the crisis in Europe. Stevens hopes to persuade Miss Kenton (he continues to refer to her thus, though she is married) to come out of retirement and help solve a staffing crisis at Darlington Hall. As he travels, he recalls the past.

Stevens speaks, or writes, in a fussily precise, stiffly formal style—butlerspeak, in a word. Viewed objectively, the style has no literary merit whatsoever. It is completely lacking in wit, sensuousness and originality. Its effectiveness as a medium for this novel resides precisely in our growing



perception of its inadequacy for what it describes. Gradually we infer that Lord Darlington was a bungling amateur diplomat who believed in appeasing Hitler and gave support to fascism and antisemitism. Stevens has never admitted to himself or to others that his employer was totally discredited by subsequent historical events, and takes pride in the impeccable service he rendered his weak and unamiable master.

The same mystique of the perfect servant rendered him incapable of recognizing and responding to the love that Miss Kenton was ready to offer him when they worked together. But a dim, heavily censored memory of his treatment of her gradually surfaces in the course of his narrative—and we realize that his real motive for seeking her out again is a vain hope of undoing the past.

Stevens repeatedly gives a favourable account of himself which turns out to be flawed or deceptive. Having delivered to Miss Kenton a letter reporting the death of her aunt, he realized that he has not "actually" offered his condolences. His hesitation about whether to return almost distracts us from his extraordinarily crass omission of any expression of regret in the preceding dialogue. His anxiety not to intrude on her grief seems to bespeak a sensitive personality, but in fact as soon as he finds another "opportunity to express my sympathy", he does no such thing, but instead rather spitefully criticises her supervision of two new maidservants. Typically, he has no word more expressive than "strange" for the feeling he experiences at the thought that Miss Kenton might be crying on the other side of the door. We may be surprised that he should suspect her of doing so, just after noting with approval her calm reception of the news. In fact many pages later he admits that he has attached his memory to the wrong episode:

> I am not at all certain now as to the actual circumstances which had led me to be standing thus in the back corridor. It occurs to me that elsewhere in attempting to gather such recollections, I may well have asserted that this memory derived from the



> minutes immediately after Miss Kenton's receiving news of her aunt's death... But now, having thought further, I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter; that in fact this fragment of memory derives from events that took place on an evening at least a few months after the death of Miss Kenton's aunt...

It was an evening, in fact, when he humiliated her by coldly rejecting her timid but unambiguous offers of love—*that* was why she was crying behind the closed door. But Stevens characteristically associates the occasion not with this private, intimate episode, but with one of Lord Darlington's most momentous conferences. The themes of political bad faith and emotional sterility are subtly interwoven in the sad story of Steven's wasted life.

from *The Art of Fiction, Illustrated from classic and modern texts*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp 155-157. "34. The Unreliable Narrator (*Kazuo Ishiguro*)."

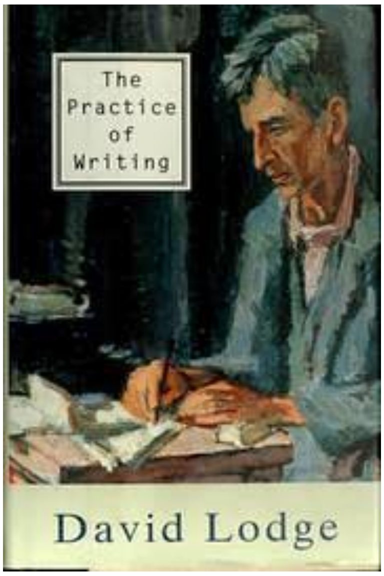


The Practice of Writing.

Essays, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary.

1996

Penguin Books, London. 1996





A self-aware creative writer.

This is a collection of occasional prose pieces about literary fiction, drama and television adaptation. Nearly all of them were written after 1987, when I gave up my academic career to become a full-time writer. A few of the essays bear the traces of my involvement in academic literary studies, including structuralist and post-structuralist critical theory; but the dominant emphasis of the book as a whole is on the *practice* of writing, in several different ways. The novelists discussed at the greatest length here interest me because they had an influence on my own creative writing, and/or because their struggles with the craft of fiction, and with the stresses and strains of the writer's life, seem to me exemplary. Most of the other essays draw directly and anecdotally on my personal experience of writing fiction, screenplays and a stage play.

Since I retired from academic life, I have found that this is the kind of criticism I most enjoy writing (and reading): criticism that tries to demystify and shed light on the creative process, to explain how literary and dramatic works are made, and to describe the many different factors, not always under the control of the writer, that come into play in this process. Writing about one's own work carries with it certain risks, including that of seeming egocentric, but I have never felt that there was any conflict or contradiction between being a self-aware creative writer and an analytical, formalist critic at the same time—on the contrary. T.S. Eliot drew the vital connection between the two activities in his essay: "The Function of Criticism": "Probably ... the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing;



this frightful toil is as much critical as creative."

The proliferation of Creative Writing courses in tertiary education in recent years, at both graduate and undergraduate levels, suggests that an emphasis on the practice of writing, both for its own sake and as a tool to enhance critical skills, may supersede the fashion for Theory which began in the late nineteen-sixties, and now seems to have exhausted the energy and interest of even its devotees. I hope this book will have some interest and value, therefore, for students and teachers of literature, creative writing and media studies. But it is intended for the general reader as well, and put together with his or her interests in mind.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996 pp ix-x. Preface.



One can consider the situation of the contemporary novelist either aesthetically or institutionally.

One can consider the situation of the contemporary novelist either aesthetically or institutionally. Under the aesthetic I include questions of genre, of formal and stylistic choice or fashion—what French critics call *écriture*. In the category of the institutional I include questions about the material conditions of writing, how writing today is produced, circulated, received and rewarded. The two are, of course, connected.

Both the aesthetic and the institutional state of writing today can be viewed from the perspective either of the critic or of the creative writer. As I function in both capacities, this is for me a splitting of the subject in a double sense. For most of my adult life, from 1960 to 1987, I combined an academic career as a university teacher and scholar with writing novels. I tried to keep a balance between these two activities; and throughout this period I published, more or less by design, a novel and a work of literary criticism in alternation. In 1987 I retired from university teaching, and although I expect to go on writing literary criticism, I doubt whether much of it will be oriented towards an academic readership. One component of that decision was a feeling that it was becoming harder and harder to make meaningful connections between an academic criticism increasingly dominated by questions of Theory, and the practice of creative writing.

Both the critic and the creative writer can address themselves to the subject of writing either descriptively or prescriptively. My own preference has always been for the descriptive. Nothing, it seems to me, is more futile or



arrogant than for critics to tell novelists what they should write about or how they should write about it or what it is no longer possible to write about. Writers themselves may be excused for doing this as a way of defending or publicizing or creating a receptive climate for their work or the work of their friends. There is a long and honourable tradition of discourse about the state of writing known as the manifesto, but for reasons I shall come to I do not think it is appropriate to the present literary moment, and I certainly do not have one to proclaim.

So these are the coordinates of my observations: aesthetic/institutional, critical/creative, descriptive/ prescriptive.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary,* Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 4-5. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?"



It is an interesting and significant fact that at the very moment when post-structuralist academic criticism has been proclaiming the Death of the Author as a theoretical axiom, an unprecedented degree of public attention has been focused on contemporary authors as living, breathing human beings.

The novel has from its very beginnings had an equivocal status, somewhere between a work of art and a commodity; but in the twentieth century, under the impact of modernism, it seemed to split into two kinds of fiction—the highbrow novel of aesthetic ambition, which sold in small numbers to a discriminating élite, and the popular or middlebrow novel of entertainment, which sold in much larger numbers to a mass audience. Now the gap seems to be narrowing again, and this has changed the attitude of the literary writer towards his audience and his peers—and his work.

The successful marketing of literary fiction depends upon a collaboration between the writer, the publisher and the mass media. Publisher and writer have a common interest, and the media have been very eager to collaborate with them for their own reasons. Developments in print and communications technology in the last decade have led to a vast expansion and diversification of media outlets—newspapers, magazines, supplements, TV channels or radio stations. They all have an inexhaustible appetite for raw material; discussion and gossip about books and writers is a cheap source of such material.

So, if you are a novelist with any kind of reputation, publishing a new



novel no longer consists of sending off the manuscript to your publisher and waiting for the reviews to appear nine months or so later. It means delicate negotiations, probably via your agent, over terms, possibly an auction. Once the contract is signed it means consultation with the publisher over the timing of the book's publication, the design of the jacket and other details of production. You might be asked to talk to the firm's sales force, or to a convention of booksellers. Around the time of publication you will be asked to give interviews to press and broadcasting media, perhaps to do bookshop readings, signings, attend literary festivals. If you are lucky enough to win or even just be shortlisted for a major literary prize, that will lead to more publicity events. And there will be yet more interviews, readings, signings, etc., if and when the book is paperbacked, turned into a film or TV series, and published in foreign countries. You may be invited to tour foreign countries by the British Council, reading from your work or lecturing on the state of the novel. It is an interesting and significant fact that at the very moment when post-structuralist academic criticism has been proclaiming the Death of the Author as a theoretical axiom, an unprecedented degree of public attention has been focused on contemporary authors as living, breathing human beings.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 13-14. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?"

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Contemporary writing ...
is likely to be reader-friendly.

There are, undoubtedly, dangers in the current literary situation of the contamination of literary values by considerations of fame and money. But they differ only in degree, not in kind, from what has always been the case, at least from the eighteenth century onwards, when writers became professionals, and ceased to rely on patronage, and the printing press turned fiction into a mass-marked commodity. It has always been necessary for novelists to struggle to reconcile, in their ways of working, pragmatic institutional considerations with aesthetic integrity. It has always been necessary to be an artist while writing your novel, and a man (or woman) of business when publishing it. All one can say is that the conditions of modern cultural production and circulation make this balancing act particularly difficult, and require from the writer a particularly clear head.

What cannot be denied, I think—and it is perhaps what Ballard means by the triumph of the bourgeois novel—is that contemporary writing, whatever particular style or mode it follows, whether realist or nonrealist, whether fabulation or metafiction or non-fiction novel, or a combination of all of these, is likely to be reader-friendly. The contemporary writer is interested in communicating. This was not always the case. Romantic writers saw their art as primarily self-expression; modernist writers as the making of symbols, or verbal objects. Contemporary critical theory tells us that the very idea of communication is an illusion, or fallacy, though it is not clear what it thinks it is doing when it tells us that. Contemporary writers, however, perhaps partly



as a result of the explosion of methods and techniques of communication in modern society—satellite telephone links, video, fax machines, photocopiers, computers, etc.—and certainly because of their greater professional involvement in the publishing and marketing of their fiction, and its adaptation to other media such as TV and film, cannot but see themselves as engaged in a process of communication with an actual or potential audience. This it seems to me is, for good or ill, an irresistible effect of living in the modern world, and it has undoubtedly had an effect on the form of contemporary fiction.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 15-16. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?"



Novels burn facts as engines burn fuel.

The ambivalent and contradictory relationship between fact and fiction in the early novel persists into its classical and modern phases. Novelists are and always have been split between, on the one hand, a desire to claim an imaginative and representative truth for their stories and, on the other hand, a conviction that the best way to secure and guarantee that truthfulness is by a scrupulous respect for empirical fact. Why else did James Joyce take such pains to establish whether his fictional character Leopold Bloom could plausibly drop down into the basement area of no. 7 Eccles Street?

Novels burn facts as engines burn fuel, and the facts can come only from the novelist's own experience or acquired knowledge. Not uncommonly, a novelist begins by drawing mainly on facts of the former kind and, when these are "used up", becomes more reliant of the latter. Joyce's progress from the realistic and autobiographical *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* to the increasingly encyclopaedic *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is an example.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 27-28. ""PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Fact and Fiction in the Novel: An Author's Note."



Graham Greene, the pro writer.

My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that Greene's political views were confused and contradictory, and that his postwar involvement with the Secret Service was essentially personal and opportunistic in motivation. We know that he was addicted to hoaxes, practical joking, and social deceptions of various kinds, and we know that from a precociously early age he dabbled in the business of spying not for any ideological reason but for the sheer hell of it, and for the pleasure of seeing the world at somebody else's expense. Undoubtedly it tickled him to move around the globe, hobnobbing with selected political leaders, observing wars and revolutions and political intrigues at first hand. It was, in the pro writer's familiar phrase, all material.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, p 67. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Lives of Graham Greene."



Finnegans Wake: the exemplary text of modern critical theory.

There is a story well known to all students of Joyce, that one day in Zurich, when he was writing *Ulysses*, he met his friend Frank Budgen in the street and told him he had been working all day and had produced only two sentences. "You have been seeking the right words?" asked Budgen "No," replied Joyce, "I have the words already. What I am seeking is the perfect order of words in the sentences I have." This little anecdote epitomizes Joyce's approach to his craft: total commitment, infinite patience, utter confidence in his own judgement. He constructed his entire literary career on the principle by which he composed those sentences. Each book was perfect of its kind, each one was different from the one before, each a more ambitious exploration of the possibilities of language. He spent seven years writing *Ulysses* and seventeen writing *Finnegans Wake.* He had the courage and self-critical objectivity to abandon *Stephen Hero* when he had written over a thousand pages of manuscript; and he had the fortitude and faith in himself to survive some of the bitterest frustrations and disappointments in his early career that any young writer has ever had to undergo. The vacillations and broken promises of English and Irish publishers, the arguments and threats of prosecution over alleged obscenity and libel, caused seemingly endless delays in the publication of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait.* His masterpiece, *Ulysses,* was for years branded as a dirty book, banned and pirated in English-speaking countries, and its author consequently denied the royalties that were his due. Even when his literary reputation was secure, and he was relieved of financial



need, mainly by the generosity of Harriet Shaw Weaver, he had to live with the knowledge that almost everybody, including his closest friends and admirers, regarded the work of the last two decades of his life as a gigantic literary folly. Now *Finnegans Wake* is firmly established in the literary canon. There is a whole scholarly industry dedicated to its explication and annotation. It is in many ways the exemplary text of modern critical theory, a book which anticipated and embodied the tenets of post-structuralism, deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Bakhtin's poetics of the novel. Joyce did not live to see the critical vindication of *Finnegans Wake,* but it would not have surprised him. "I have written something to keep the professors busy for the next hundred years," he said of *Ulysses,* but it could have been said with even more truth of *Finnegans Wake.*

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 130-131. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."



Joyce's Choices.

I have called this lecture "Joyce's Choices" because it seems to me useful to look at his writing in terms of the choices or decisions which determined its development. Some of these were aesthetic choices, and some were life choices, but the two were always interrelated. These are some of the key choices Joyce made and stuck to with extraordinary steadfastness: to renounce the Catholic faith in which he was brought up; to become an artist, rather than a priest, or a doctor or a lawyer; to live for most of his life in exile from Ireland, never returning to it after the age of thirty; to write in the English language, or his own polyglot mutation of it, and to turn his back on the revival of Gaelic and the Irish Literary Movement at the turn of the century; to concentrate as a writer on prose fiction as opposed to verse or drama; and to form a permanent and monogamous if for many years irregular relationship with a woman of humble background, limited education, and such scant interest in literature that she never read *Ulysses.*

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, p 132. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."



Everyone who met the young Joyce was struck by his extraordinary pride, arrogance and self-confidence.

Everyone who met the young Joyce was struck by his extraordinary pride, arrogance and self-confidence. "There is a young boy called Joyce who may do something," George Russell wrote to a friend. "He is as proud as Lucifer and writes verses perfect in their technique and sometimes beautiful in quality." To Yeats, Russell wrote, "The first spectre of the new generation has appeared. His name is Joyce. I have suffered from him and I would like you to suffer." When he met Yeats Joyce said, "I see you are too old to be influenced by me."

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, p 135. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."



Joyce's choice of the novel.

James Joyce never published a book that had the familiar structure and texture of the classic realist novel. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were all highly original deviations from that tradition, each more boldly experimental than the one before. Even the stories in *Dubliners* were more experimental, more subversive of the traditional well-made short story, than they appear at first sight. If we call Joyce a novelist—and there is no other convenient term to use—it must be in the sense in which Mikhail Bakhtin defined the novel, as a type of narrative which has its roots in classical Menippean satire, in the folk tradition of carnival, and in the great parodying-travestying masters of Renaissance literature, Rabelais and Cervantes. The novel as Bakhtin defines it is both a type of discourse and a frame of mind. As a discourse it is characterized by the interweaving of a variety of different voices and styles, oral and written—what Bakhtin called dialogism or polyphony. As a frame of mind it questions and subverts all totalizing ideological systems by the liberating power of laughter and the celebration of the body—what Bakhtin called the carnivalesque. Joyce's choice of the novel as his preferred literary from coincided with his discovery of the possibilities of a dialogic prose in Bakhtin's sense, a medium which could accommodate both the most artificial rhetoric and the most casual speech, which could be sublime or coarse, fantastic or realistic, according to need—and often within the same paragraph or even sentence.

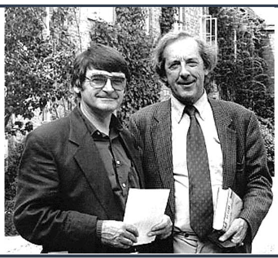
from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, p 138. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' Joyce's Choices."



John Burgess Wilson.

The name "Anthony Burgess" is itself a fiction, thinly disguising the identity of John Burgess Wilson, who took Anthony as his confirmation name. This is a pious custom of the Roman Catholic Church, in which the young John Wilson was brought up. His father was a Catholic of recusant stock, though somewhat wayward, not to say absent-minded, in his allegiance (he once entered a church with his hat and a cigarette on, under the impression that it was a pub, a more habitual place of resort). His stepmother had married into the Dwyers, a staunchly Catholic family of Manchester Irish who produced George Patrick Dwyer, Bishop of Leeds and later Archbishop of Birmingham. Anthony Burgess (as I will continue to call him, to avoid confusion) attended Catholic schools, and although he subsequently lapsed from the Church this education marked his work almost as indelibly as it did the work of his master, James Joyce. Some slightly impatient asides suggest that he still considers himself a more authentically Catholic writer than literary converts like Evelyn Waugh and Mr Greene.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 143-144. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Making of Anthony Burgess."



A bridge between modernism and post-modernism.

When he wrote his first novel, *A Vision of Battlements*, he drew on his military service in Gilbraltar but based the narrative on the *Aeneid*, as Joyce had based *Ulysses* on the *Odyssey.* Joyce's "mythical method", Burgess plausibly argues, was not merely scaffolding which could be dismantled once the building was complete, but also a way of adding density and resonance, enhancing the pleasure of the text. Such multilayeredness, which Burgess compares to the vertical scoring of symphonic music, has always been a feature of his fiction, and makes it something of a bridge between modernism and post-modernism. Unlike most British novelists who started publishing in the 1950s, Burgess revered the mythopoeia of the moderns and paid it the tribute of imitation. Later, in works like *A Clockwork Orange* and *M/F*, he showed himself capable of wholly original experiment in language and narrative form, and thus helped lever the British novel out of the neo-realist rut in which the Movement and the Angry Young Men had left it.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, p 146. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Making of Anthony Burgess."



Anthony Burgess.

I met Anthony Burgess several times in the latter part of his life, and regarded him as a friend. In 1986 he came to Birmingham University to receive an Honorary doctorate, and I kept him company for the few days of his visit. I was struck by his ability to "talk shop" with almost every academic I introduced him to, whatever their discipline. He seemed to have read everything and forgotten nothing. While he was with us he completed a musical composition for brass instruments ensemble which was performed by a section of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He was a Renaissance man, polyglot and polymath, born into an age of specialization where such energy and versatility are suspected and sometimes sneered at.

In the autumn of 1992 I shared a reading/signing event with Anthony at Waterstone's bookshop in South Kensington. He had recently published his impressively knowledgeable book on the English language, *A Mouthful of Air*. Puffing defiantly on a cigarillo, he told me that he had just been diagnosed as having lung cancer, and that the prognosis was not good. In spite of bearing the weight of this bad news, he entertained the audience with a characteristic flow of wit and wisdom. It was a performance typical of the courage and professionalism of the man. He died in November 1993, aged 76.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 148-149. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Making of Anthony Burgess."



The modernist poetics of fiction.

A general characteristic of modernist fiction is the attenuation of its narrative element. As the modernist novel developed, its mimetic impulse was focused more and more upon consciousness, the subconscious and the unconscious, and less and less upon the external world seen objectively, as the arena for action. In consciousness and the unconscious the casual and temporal relationships between events are scrambled and distorted by memory and desire, and truth and meaning are adumbrated through mythical allusion and poetic symbolism. There is a congruence in this respect between the masterpieces of modernist fiction and the masterpieces of modernist verse like *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos*. In Jakobson's terms, modernist aesthetics forced the innately metonymic form of prose fiction towards the metaphoric pole which had always been the appropriate domain of poetry. Joyce's progress from the realistic but enigmatic stories of *Dubliners* to the symbolist *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* to what T.S. Eliot called the "mythical method" of *Ulysses* (based on a metaphorical substitution of Leopold Bloom for Odysseus, and a drastic reduction of the scale of the epic action), to *Finnegans Wake,* in which the differences between personages and events are swamped by a punning insistence on the resemblances between them – this development was paradigmatic. Virginia Woolf's polemical essays, "Modern Fiction" and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown", proclaiming the obsolescence of the traditional realistic novel, are well-known expositions of the modernist poetics of fiction.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996,

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p 157. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' What Kind of Fiction Did Nabokov Write? A Practitioner's View."



Free indirect style.

Free indirect style is a mode of narration which as it were fuses and interweaves the authorial narrator's speech and the speech of the character. By reporting the character's thoughts in the third person, past tense, as in traditional narrative, but keeping to vocabulary appropriate to the character, and omitting some or all of the tags that normally introduce reported speech (like "he thought", "she wondered", etc.), an effect of intimate access to the character's inner self is produced, without relinquishing the task of narrating to the character entirely, as in the pseudo-autobiography or interior monologue. This type of discourse—free indirect speech or free indirect style—is peculiar to the novel; it makes its appearance in the late eighteenth century and Jane Austen was probably the first novelist to realize its full potential.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, p 186. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novel as Communication."



The modernist novel thus tends to endorse the philosophical argument known as solipsism—that the only thing I can be sure exists is myself as a thinking subject.

The emergence of the stream-of-consciousness novel at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was obviously related to a huge epistemological shift in culture at large, from locating reality in the objective world of actions and things as perceived by common sense, to locating it in the minds of individual thinking subjects, each of whom constructs their own reality, and has difficulty in matching it with the reality constructed by others. If the modern novel is a form of communication, then paradoxically what it often communicates is the difficulty or impossibility of communication. One of the modernist arguments for removing the intrusive authorial voice—wise, omniscient, reliable, reassuring—from the novel was that it was false to our experience that life is in fact fragmented, chaotic, incomprehensible, absurd. The trouble with the classic realist novel, in this view, was that it was not realistic enough: truth to life was sacrificed to the observance of purely narrative conventions. "If a writer could… base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention," said Virginia Woolf, in her celebrated essay, "Modern Fiction", "there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style…''. Instead she called for a kind of fiction that would record the atoms of experience "as they fall upon the mind, in the order in which they fall,'' that would "trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each



sight or incident scores upon the consciousness."

The modernist novel thus tends to endorse the philosophical argument known as solipsism—that the only thing I can be sure exists is myself as a thinking subject.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 187-188. "PART ONE: Novels and 'The Novel.' The Novel as Communication."



The paperback novel.

The novelist's medium is the written word. One might almost say the printed word, since the novel as we know it was born with the invention of printing. Typically, the novel is consumed by a silent, solitary reader, who may be anywhere at the time—in bed, on the beach, in the bath, on a train or aeroplane. I even knew a man (British, of course) who in the 1950s used to read while he was driving across the great empty prairies of America. Nowadays he would have novels on audio-cassettes to listen to—a new form of storytelling that has become hugely popular in the age of the traffic jam. Whether these artefacts should be categorized as prose fiction or drama is a nice question that I haven't time to pursue here. The paperback novel is, however, still the cheapest, most portable and adaptable form of narrative entertainment. It is limited to a single channel of information—writing. But within that restriction it is the most versatile of narrative forms. It can go—effortlessly—anywhere: into space, into people's heads, into their bodies, into palaces or prisons or pyramids, without any consideration of cost or practical feasibility such as the dramatist or screenplay writer has to take into consideration. It can be, if we include the short story under the general category of novel, virtually any length.

from *The Practice of Writing. Essay, Lectures, Reviews and a Diary*, Penguin Books, London. 1996, pp 204-205. "PART TWO: Mixed Media. Novel, Screenplay, Stage Play: Three Ways of Telling a Story."

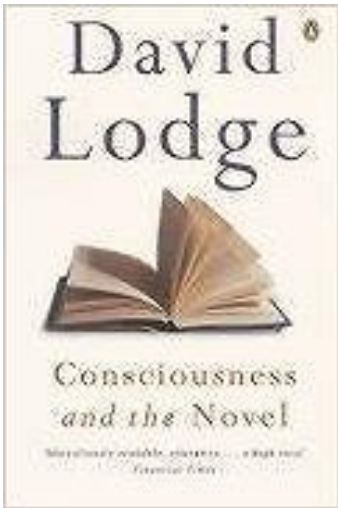


Consciousness and the Novel.

Connected Essays.

2002

Penguin Books, London, 2002





Such general, or generalisable, ideas as I have about literature nowadays tend to grow out of reflection on my own "practice of writing"—the title of my last book of criticism.

For most of my adult life I combined the professions of novelist and academic, writing novels and works of literary criticism in regular alternation. I used some words of Gertrude Stein's as an epigraph for one of my books of criticism, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, that could serve the purpose for all of them: "What does literature do and how does it do it. And what does English literature do and how does it do it. And what ways does it use to do what it does." I posed these questions mainly in relation to the novel, in an effort to ground the interpretation and evaluation of novels in what I hopefully called a "poetics of fiction"—that is, a systematic and comprehensive description of the stylistic devices and narrative methods through which novels communicate their meanings and have the effects that they have upon readers. I started, in a book called *Language of Fiction* (1966), by applying to novels the kind of close reading that the New Criticism had applied primarily to lyric poetry and poetic drama. In the 1970s and 1980s, like many other English and American academic critics, I absorbed and domesticated some of the concepts and methods of Continental European structuralism, and applied them in *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977) and *Working with Structuralism* (1981). Later, again like many others, I discovered the work of the great Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, which went back to the 1920s but only became widely known in the recent past. His idea that the novel, unlike the classic genres of epic, lyric, and tragedy, was essentially dialogic or polyphonic in its verbal texture, and



his subtle analysis of the various types of discourse that are woven into it, informed and inspired most of the essays in my book *After Bakhtin* (1990).

In short, my quest for a poetics of fiction was at every stage furthered by exposure to some new, or new-to-me, source of literary theory. But the journey ended with my discovery of Bakhtin, partly because he seemed to answer satisfactorily all the remaining questions I had posed myself; and partly because as literary theory entered its post-structuralist phase it seemed to be less interested in the formal analysis of literary texts, and more interested in using them as a basis for philosophical speculation and ideological polemic. It so happened—or perhaps it wasn't entirely coincidental—that at about this time, in the late eighties, I retired from academic life to become a full-time freelance writer. I have continued to write criticism, but for a nonspecialist audience, and have more or less given up reading literary theory. Such general, or generalisable, ideas as I have about literature nowadays tend to grow out of reflection on my own "practice of writing"—the title of my last book of criticism. Such reflection is also a feature of several of the essays in this volume.

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, pp ix-x. "Preface."



Finnegans Wake: a punning synthetic language of his own invention.

The primary limitation is this: that verbal language is essentially linear. One word or word-group comes after another, and we apprehend their syntactically cumulative meaning lineally, in time. When we speak and listen, when we write and read, we are bound to this linear order. But we know intuitively, and cognitive science has confirmed, that consciousness itself is not linear. In computer terms the brain is a *parallel* processor running many programs simultaneously. In neurobiological terms it is a complex system of billions of neurons between which countless connections are being made simultaneously as long as we are conscious. Virginia Woolf's injunction to "record the atoms [of experience] as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall" is therefore flawed. The atoms do not fall in a discrete chronological order—they bombard us from all directions, and are dealt with simultaneously by different parts of the brain. "The temporal order of discriminations cannot be what fixes the subjective order in experience," says Daniel Dennett in *Consciousness Explained*.[1] His metaphor for the brain is Pandemonium, in which all the different areas are, as it were, shouting at once and competing for dominance. Intuitively, Virginia Woolf knew this. In an interesting correspondence her friend Jacques Raverat, a painter, argued that writing's essential linearity prevented it from representing the complex multiplicity of a mental event, as a painting could. She replied that she was trying to get away from the "formal railway line of the sentence … people never did think or feel in that way, but all over the place, in your way."[2] By



breaking up the formal railway line of the sentence, by the use of ellipses and parentheses, by blurring the boundaries between what is thought and what is spoken, and by switching point of view and narrative voice with bewildering frequency—by these and similar devices she tried to imitate in her fiction the elusiveness of the phenomenon of consciousness. But she could never entirely escape the sequential linearity of her medium. The pun is perhaps the closest that verbal language can come to mimicking the simultaneous input of heterogeneous information which is the normal state of consciousness before the mind takes up the task of selecting and articulating some of this information verbally; and by writing an entire narrative text, *Finnegans Wake*, in a punning synthetic language of his own invention, Joyce perhaps came closer than any writer had done before to representing the extraordinary complexity of the brain activity that goes on just below the surface of the self-conscious mind. But the price of this was to sacrifice the narrative cohesion which makes stories intelligible to us, and therefore to take leave of the novel as a literary form.

[1]Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 119.
2Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, vol. 2 (1972), pp. 176-177.

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, pp 62-63. "1. Consciousness and the Novel."



The single human voice, telling its own story, can seem the only authentic way of rendering consciousness.

In a world where nothing is certain, in which transcendental belief has been undermined by scientific materialism, and even the objectivity of science is qualified by relativity and uncertainty, the single human voice, telling its own story, can seem the only authentic way of rendering consciousness. Of course in fiction this is just as artful, or artificial, a method as writing about a character in the third person; but it creates an illusion of reality, it commands the willing suspension of the reader's disbelief, by modelling itself on the discourses of personal witness: the confession, the diary, autobiography, the memoir, the deposition. And it is not coincidental that the boundary between first-person literary fiction and autobiography is becoming increasingly blurred.

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, pp 87-88. "1. Consciousness and the Novel."



It may be, therefore, that every time we try to describe the conscious self we misrepresent it because we are trying to fix something that is always changing.

One must concede that the Western humanist concept of the autonomous individual self is not universal, eternally given, and valid for all time and all places, but is a product of history and culture. This doesn't, however, necessarily mean that it isn't a good idea, or that its time has passed. A great deal of what we value in civilized life depends upon it. We also have to acknowledge that the individual self is not a fixed and stable entity, but is constantly being created and modified in consciousness through interaction with others and the world. It may be, therefore, that every time we try to describe the conscious self we misrepresent it because we are trying to fix something that is always changing; but really we have no alternative, any more than the physicist has any alternative to bringing about the collapse of the wave function when he makes an observation, or the deconstructionist has any alternative to using language which she claims is bound to undermine its ostensible claims to meaning. My novels are the products of numerous revisions, and I know that I could have gone on revising them indefinitely, but a published novel is simply more useful as information than a collection of its various drafts would be, and certainly more useful than a novel which is never published because its author never stopped revising it.

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p 91. "1. Consciousness and the Novel."



Inasmuch as it aspires to a scientific, or at least systematic, knowledge of its subject, criticism can be seen as hostile to creativity itself.

...I generally avoid reading criticism about my own work, especially academic criticism of the kind I used to write myself, and taught students to write, because I find it hinders rather than helps creation.

Academic criticism is the demonstration of a professional mastery. It cannot help trying to say the last word on its subject; it cannot help giving the impression that it operates on a higher plane of truth than the texts it discusses. The author of those texts therefore tends to feel reduced, diminished by such discourse, however well meant it is. In a way, the more approving such criticism is in its own terms, the more threatening and unsettling it can seem to the writer who is its object. As Graham Greene said, there comes a time when an established writer "is more afraid to read his favourable critics than his unfavourable, for with terrible patience they unroll before his eyes the unchanging pattern of the carpet."[1]

Academic criticism may pretend, may even deceive itself, that its relation to a creative work is purely complementary. But it also has its own hidden agenda: the demonstration of a professional skill, the refutation of competing peers, the claim to be making an addition to knowledge. The pursuit of these ends entails a degree of selection, manipulation, and re-presentation of the original text so drastic that its author will sometimes have difficulty in recognizing his or her creative work in the critical account of it. But it is not only in relation to criticism of their own work that creative writers often feel



alienated by academic criticism. Inasmuch as it aspires to a scientific, or at least systematic, knowledge of its subject, criticism can be seen as hostile to creativity itself.

[1]Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (1980), p. 134. There may be an allusion to a short story by Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet."

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p 98. "2. Literary Criticism and Literary Creation."



The "literary best-seller".

Towards the end of the century this solidarity between literary novelists and the reading public began to disintegrate. Some writers—Hardy was a notable example—fell foul of the prudish constraints imposed by magazine editors on the representation of sexuality. Others, like Henry James, found that the pursuit of formal beauty and psychological subtlety in their fiction made it less marketable. It is recorded that in 1900 the business manager of the *Atlantic Monthly*, which had serialised several of James's novels, "begged the editor … 'with actual tears in his eyes' not to print another 'sinker' by him lest the *Atlantic* be thought 'a high-brow periodical.' "[1] The plea was revealing and prophetic. In the modern period a split developed between cutting-edge literary fiction and middle-brow entertainment fiction. Practitioners of the former, like James, Conrad, Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Ford Madox Ford, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf, resigned themselves, with good or ill grace, to addressing a small but discriminating readership, and were often exiles from their own society in either a literal or a metaphorical sense; while exponents of the traditional, page-turning novel, with well-made plots and an unproblematic rendering of social reality, like Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, Compton Mackenzie, and J. B. Priestley, were the commercially successful literary "celebrities," interviewed in, reported by, and themselves contributing to the mass media. Towards the end of the twentieth century, however, this divide became less evident, indeed almost invisible. For a variety of reasons, some cultural, some socioeconomic, literary fiction became more reader-friendly and an object of exploitative interest to the mass media



and big business. The "literary best-seller" (that is, an artistically ambitious and innovative book that also sells in huge numbers, like *Midnight's Children* or *The Name of the Rose*)—a concept that would have seemed a contradiction in terms in the period of high modernism—once again became an achievable goal, as it had been in the era of Dickens, and the authors of such books are now celebrities. Even the modestly successful literary novelist today is expected to take part in the marketing of his or her work by giving interviews, appearing on TV and radio, taking part in public readings, book signings, and other meet-the-author events, and thus experiences, in a pale form, the phenomenon of author-as-celebrity that Dickens's career inaugurated, and the stresses and contradictions that go with it.

[1]Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), pp. 7-8, First published in 1869.

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, pp. 118-120. "4. Forster's Flawed Masterpiece."



The modern or modernist novel ... is characterised by obscurity, ambiguity, and the presentation of experience as perceived by characters whose vision is limited or unreliable.

James was an uncompromisingly highbrow writer, an innovator in form, whose works, particularly the later ones, are difficult and demanding even for well-educated readers. He was one of the founding fathers of the modern or modernist novel, which is characterised by obscurity, ambiguity, and the presentation of experience as perceived by characters whose vision is limited or unreliable. These are not the usual ingredients of best-selling fiction—and they are equally alien to the cinema. This is why the popularity of James's books with modern filmmakers is paradoxical as well as ironic.

from *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p 202. "7. Henry James and the Movies."



David Lodge: A Chronology

1935	David Lodge was born on 28 January 1935 in South London.	David Lodge s-a născut la 28 ianuarie 1935 în sudul Londrei.
1952	Graduates from the catholic school St. Joseph's Academy.	Termină şcoala catolică St. Joseph's Academy.
1952	Matriculates at the University of London.	Intră la Universitatea din Londra.
1953	At the age of 18 he writes a first (unpublished) novel called *The Devil, the World and the Flesh*.	La 18 ani scrie primul său roman (nepublicat), *The Devil, the World and the Flesh*.
1955	He earns a Bachelor of Arts in English.	BA în filoligie engleză.
1955-1957	He spends two years in the Royal Armoured Corps as military service.	Face doi ani de serviciu milita în cadrul Royal Armoured Corps.
1959	He earns a Master of Arts at the London University with a thesis	MA la London University, cu disertația „Romanul Catolic: de



	on "The Catholic Novel from the Oxford Movement to the Present Day".	la Oxford Movement până în prezent".
1959	He marries Mary Frances Jacob, a fellow student from London University, a girl he met when they were both 18.	Se căsătoreşte cu o colegă universitate, Mary Frances Jacob, pe care a cunoscut-o pe când aveau amândoi 18 ani.
1959	He works in London as an English teacher for the British Council.	Lucrează la Londra ca profesor de limba engleză pentru Consiliul Britanic.
1960	He publishes his first novel, *The Picturegoers.*	Publică primul roman, *The Picturegoers.*
1960	He accepts a one-year post as a lecturer at the University of Birmingham.	Lucrează la Universitatea din Birmingham.
1961	He is assigned on a tenure-track position as assistant lecturer.	Devine asistent universitar titular.
1962	He publishes *Ginger, You're Barmy*, his novelistic response to his army service in the mid-1950s.	Publică *Ginger, You're Barmy,* un roman despre experiențele sale din armată, în timpul anilor 1950.
1963	He collaborates with Malcolm Bradbury and a student, James Duckett, in the development of a	Colaborează cu Malcolm Bradbury şi încă un student, James Duckett, la realizarea unei



	satirical revue entitled *Between These Four Walls f*or the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.	reviste satirice, *Between These Four Walls,* pentru Birmingham Repertory Theatre.
1964	He moves with his family to the United States for a year, having received a scholarship from the Harkness Commonwealth Fellowship. He studies American literature at Brown University while there. As required by the fellowship, he travelled extensively in the USA, to California and back to New York	Se mută împreună cu familia în Statele Unite pentru un an, cu o bursă de studiu Harkness Commonwealth Fellowship. În acest timp, frecventează cursul de Literatură Americană de la Universitatea Brown şi călătoreşte pe teritoriul SUA, conform regulamentului bursei primite.
1965	He publishes the novel *The British Museum is Falling Down.*	Publică romanul *The British Museum is Falling Down.*
1966	He publishes his first book of academic criticism *Language of Fiction*, a critical work which became one of the most widely read of all contemporary books about the novel.	Publică prima carte de critică literară, *Language of Fiction*, printre cele mai citite cărți contemporane despre roman.
1967	He submitts the already published *Language of Fiction* for what is called an "official degree", as is possible for members of the	I se acordă titlul de Doctor în Filologie pe baza cărții *Limbajul romanului*, publicată anterior. Cadrelor didactice ale



	academic staff at Birmingham University, and it was assessed and awarded a PhD without a formal defence.	Universității din Birminhgam în această situație nu li se mai cerea să susțină teza public.
1969-1970	He becomes a visiting professor at the University of California.	Este profesor invitat la Universitatea din California.
1970	He publishes *Out of Shelter*, a semi-autobiographical novel based on Lodge's childhood experiences during World War II and the austerity of England's postwar years.	Publică *Out of Shelter,* un roman semi-autobiografic bazat pe copilăria sa în timpul celui de-al doilea război mondial şi pe amintiri din perioada de austeritate a Angliei de după război.
1971	*The Novelist at the Crossroads and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism,* criticism.	*The Novelist at the Crossroads and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism,* critică literară.
1971	He publishes *Evelyn Waugh*, for the Columbia Essays on Modern Writers series.	Publică *Evelyn Waugh,* pentru seria Columbia Essays on Modern Writers.
1971	*20th-Century Literary Criticism: A Reader,* criticism.	*20th-Century Literary Criticism: A Reader,* critică literară.
975	*Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses*, novel.	*Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses*, roman.



1975	*The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature*, criticism.	*The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature*, critică literară.
1975	He receives the Hawthornden Prize for *Changing Places.*	Primeşte premiul Hawthornden pentru *Changing Places.*
1975	He receives the Yorkshire Post Book Award (Finest Fiction) for *Changing Places.*	Primeşte premiul Yorkshire Post Book Award (Finest Fiction) pentru *Changing Places.*
1980	*How Far Can You Go?* novel, published in the U.S. as *Souls and Bodies.*	*How Far Can You Go?* roman, publicat în Statele Unite ale Americii sub titlul *Souls and Bodies.*
1980	He receives the Whitbread Book of the Year award for *How Far Can You Go?*	Primeşte premiul Whitbread Book of the Year pentru *How Far Can You Go?*
1981	*Working with Structuralism: Essays and Reviews in 19th and 20th Century Literature,* criticism.	*Working with Structuralism: Essays and Reviews in 19th and 20th Century Literature,* critică literară.
1984	*Small World: An Academic Romance*, novel.	*Small World: An Academic Romance,* roman.
1984	*Small World* is shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.	*Small World* este nominalizat pentru Man Booker Prize.



1986	*Write on: Occasional Essays 1965-1985,* criticism.	*Write on: Occasional Essays 1965-1985,* critică literară.
1987	He retires from his post at Birmingham in order to become a full-time writer.	Se retrage din postul de profesor de la Universitea Birmingham pentru a se dedica scrisului.
1988	*Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader,* criticism.	*Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader,* critică literară.
1988	*Nice Work*, novel.	*Nice Work*, roman.
1988	His *Small World: An Academic Romance* is adapted for television by Howard Schuman.	Howard Schuman adaptează *Small World: An Academic Romance* pentru televiziune.
1989	He adapts *Nice Work* for television.	Adaptează *Nice Work* pentru televiziune.
1989	He receives the Sunday Express Book of the Year award for *Nice Work.*	Primeşte premiul Sunday Express Book of the Year pentru *Nice Work.*
1989	He receives the Royal Television Society Award for Best Drama Serial, for *Nice Work.*	I se conferă Royal Television Society Award for Best Drama Serial pentru *Nice Work.*
1989	*Nice Work* is shortlisted for Man Booker Prize.	*Nice Work* este nominalizat pentru Man Booker Prize.



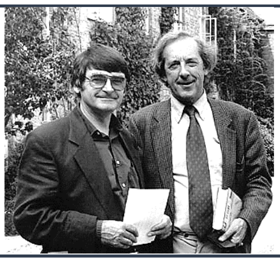
1990	*After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*, criticism.	*After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*, critică literară.
1990	He receives the Silver Nymph award for the screenplay of *Nice Work* at the International Television Festival.	Primeşte premiul Silver Nymph pentru scenariul *Nice Work* la International Television Festival.
1990	*The Writing Game*, theatre play.	*The Writing Game*, piesă de teatru.
1991	*Paradise News*, novel.	*Paradise News*, roman.
1992	*The Art of Fiction*, criticism.	*The Art of Fiction*, critică literară.
1992	*Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, criticism.	*Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, critică literară.
1993	*A David Lodge Trilogy*, a single volume comprising *Changing Places*, *Small World* and *Nice Work*.	*A David Lodge Trilogy*, volum care cuprinde *Changing Places*, *Small World* şi *Nice Work*.
1994	He adapts *Martin Chuzzlewitt* for television.	Adaptează *Martin Chuzzlewitt* pentru televiziune.
1995	He receives the Writes' Guild Award (Best Adapted Screenplay) for *Martin Chuzzlewit.*	Primeşte Writes' Guild Award (Best Adapted Screenplay) pentru *Martin Chuzzlewit.*



1995	*Therapy*, novel.	*Therapy*, roman.
1995	He adapts *The Writing Game* for television.	Adaptează *The Writing Game* pentru micul ecran.
1996	He receives the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book) for *Therapy*.	Primeşte Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book) pentru *Therapy.*
1997	*The Practice of Writing,* criticism.	*The Practice of Writing,* critică literară.
1997	He is made a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture.	Decorat cu ordinul *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres*.
1998	*The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up: And Other Stories,* a collection of stories. Published in the UK only as a limited edition	*The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up: And Other Stories,* povestiri.
1998	He is awarded the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for his services to literature.	Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) pentru activitatea literară.
1999	*Home Truths*, a novela adapted from an original play.	*Home Truths,* scurt roman adaptat după o piesă de teatru.
2001	*Thinks...*, novel.	*Thinks...*, roman.



2003	*Consciousness and the Novel*, criticism.	*Consciousness and the Novel*, critică literară.
2004	*Author, Author: A Novel* (about Henry James).	*Author, Author: A Novel* (despre Henry James).
2006	*The Year of Henry James: The Story of a Novel.*	*The Year of Henry James: The Story of a Novel.*
2008	*Deaf Sentence*, novel.	*Deaf Sentence*, roman.
2009	*Deaf Sentence* is shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book).	*Deaf Sentence* este nominalizat pentru Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book).
2011	*Secret Thoughts*, play based on *Thinks...*	*Secret Thoughts*, piesă de teatru după romanul *Thinks...*
2011	*A Man of Parts*, a novel about H.G. Wells.	*A Man of Parts*, un roman despre H.G. Wells.
2014	*Lives in Writing*, a collection of essays, is published.	Apare volumul de eseuri *Lives in Writing*.





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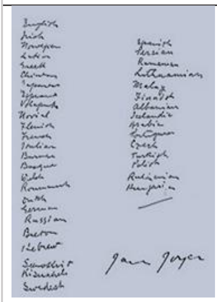
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